

CAPITAL AND FOREIGN  
DEBTORS IN JANE AUSTIN'S NOVELS

by

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To my husband, Luis Eduardo Valencia, and to our  
children, Victoria, Santiago and Virginia Valencia  
Castellanos, who help to make all my efforts worthwhile.

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## PREFACE

Jane Austen is an author whose works I have read over at different periods of my life, always finding new pleasures and fresh truth in them. And yet to capture her identity on my own words, to express what she has meant and meant to I read her, is as difficult as describing anyone I personally know and love. To me, addressing the question of who Jane Austen is as a writer requires somehow engaging in dialogue with my own development as a woman, without dwelling on a single autobiographical detail of my own. Jane Austen addressed me, from my adolescence onwards, in ways that answered my needs as a reader who was female as no one else had answered them. Even now, decades later, the dialogue with her, as much more conscious and reflexive than before, has lost none of its joys. As I attempt to characterize her, I invoke as a guest for the author that could not have started without the groundwork of several successive layers of delighted readings of her novels.

In this poststructuralist age with a lesson for the author might need some explanation, even, some might feel, an apology. After all, it has become commonplace to insist that the author's intentions need not concern the critic, and to celebrate writing as "that neutral, masculine, oblique space

where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost."<sup>1</sup> Yet then, as Nancy E. Miller argues, "the postmodernist decision that the author is dead, and subjectivity agency along with him, does not necessarily work for women and powerfully forecloses the question of identity for them,"<sup>2</sup> while postmodernist men have felt tickled by Western culture's successive rationalism, by its obsession revolving around the self, by its narcissistic introspection into subjectivity, women have been discovering that culture too its having denied them full access to rationality, a strong sense of self, the recognition of their being subjects in their own right.

Nevertheless, the cult of the author as the privileged, prominent subject is rightly dead. The myth of that patriarchal being was based on a conception of language as a transparent medium, a simple vehicle for meaning, which some superior beings, the Great Authors, use for the expression of eternal, perfectly intelligible, yet subtly intricate truths. These truths remain hidden from the eyes of common people until the Great Mind discloses them; then they become

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<sup>1</sup>Jacques Derrida, "The Death of the Author," *Interpretation* (Trans. by Stephen Heath) (New York: SUNY and Waco, 1977), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>Nancy E. Miller, "Challenging the Subject: Authorship, Writing and the Reader," in *Female Subjectivities*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 174.

intellectually accessible to intelligent readers. Such knowledge  
faith is no longer possible.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to the two extremes  
of the cult/death of the author. In Mikhail Bakhtin's complex  
conception of language, for example, we find the possibility  
of exploring the confidence and conflict of ideological  
positions in the utterance. His views allow us to regard the  
author as the orchestrator, the conductor of a chorus of  
ideological voices, whose own voice is refashioned in and  
through the others.

And yet, as Bakhtin has said, "Of the real author, as he  
exists outside the utterance, we can hear absolutely nothing  
at all." For we know him (or her) through his utterances in  
novels, in letters, in journals, in reported conversations.  
These utterances, furthermore, are themselves the product of  
dialogue, ongoing exchanges; Jane Austen's utterances--her  
novels--are already the product of a dialogue with the  
ideologies of her times, with the utterances she came in  
contact with. But no author through what collective or  
individual dialogue efforts an utterance has come into being,  
when we read it we respond as to a person. "In all cases,"  
Bakhtin says, "we hear in it a unified creative will, a  
definite position, to which it is possible to react  
dialogically."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevskii's Poetics, ed.  
and tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota  
Press, 1984), p. 184. All further references to this work will

To engage in dialogue, then, with Jane Austen's "unified will" to produce certain types of works, with her positions and attitudes, will be the purpose of this work. Rather than assume, with herthes, that the author is dead, I will strive, with Nabokov, to arrive at "the level of the author," to access "the intentions and accounts of the author" herself,<sup>4</sup> refracted by means of her novels and through them. This will be no mere intellectual exercise. Her "intentions and accounts" were vital to me when I was growing up, because I found little else in cultural tradition that would seem to allow a place for females. As I matured, I have continued to grapple with the problem of how women interact with culture, and as I have brought new capabilities, new understanding to the reading of Jane Austen's novels. I will now endeavor to read them anew, letting Austen say to me what I, given my background, given the year I am writing in, can now understand. In doing so, I will be attempting to validate the intellectual grounds of an essential portion my own education, trying to understand the complex mechanisms of my own grounding in culture. It will be, as I noted above, a labor of gratitude, and love.

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be marked FGP and included in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Nabokov, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Carol Gregory and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 114. All further references to this work will be marked M and included in the text.



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## KEY TO SYMBOLS

Works by Jean Sartre:

- HA Notre humanité
- FF Freedom and Existence
- E Essays
- HN Human Works

Works by Mikhail Bakhtin:

- HM "Discourse in the Novel"
- FFCM "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel"
- FCF Fragments of Bakhtin's Fiction
- HW Bakhtin and His World

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

CARNIVAL AND FEMINISM:  
DISCOURSE IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

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Jane Austen's main message, her most basic attitude, is laughter: working with three of Austen's novels that consistently invite us to laugh, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*, this study shows how Austen deals with ideologies and social conditions profoundly inimical to women's development, and how she constructs, out of this material, complete fictional worlds in which her heroines can achieve love, happiness and growth without submitting to one. I will consider this complexity in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogue and carnival, as we shall see, Austen's novels combine the languages of different literary and extra-literary genres, as well as a diversity of approaches to the major ideological problems of her age. They also combine the languages of different social groups, focusing on the differences of gender and generation, and delving deeply and dialogically into class conflicts among the "middling

classes," rather than presenting the whole spectrum of social classes. By minimizing the characteristic speech and ideological positions of characters, combining them with their own, Austen's narrators engage them in dialogic interaction.

This study will further argue that Austen's great originality lay in her transposing the cultural opposition between popular carnival and an official ideology, with carnival's characteristic mingling of social classes, to the tension between male and female within a limited range of classes. To her there were crossclassing carnival, Austen's characters and narrators effectively resist the subordinate position to which women are assigned. Adopting carnival to feminist ends, Austen has her protagonists and her narrative voices adopt a contestatory attitude of gay resistance vis-à-vis the serious, dogmatic arrangements of patriarchy. Women's limitations are symbolically overcome by the creation of partial utopias at the conclusion of each novel. In contrast to the adverse conditions of the initial realistic fictional world.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's main resource, her most basic attitude, was laughter. Because her voice was never strident, her manner never discordant, the peculiar shape of her laughter allowed many to smile at her wit, without feeling the force of her irony. As G. W. Harding said, for a long time "my books [were] . . . read and enjoyed by precisely the sort of people whom she disliked. . . .<sup>1</sup> Critics' attitudes would have to change before they could realize how original she was, how daring, in saying what she had been saying, while seemingly expressed only in the surface of her world. Because her satirizes to the problems a woman writer of her time inevitably faced were highly creative, it was not easy to see how she responded to a social reality that allowed little room for the intelligent independence of a woman, to a culture where the ideal human being was male. Malin's readings are

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<sup>1</sup>G. W. Harding, "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the work of Jane Austen," *Scrutiny*, 4, 4 (March, 1941), p. 147. Harding was referring fundamentally to the ambivalence and sentimental cult of Austen by devotees that seem to be known as "Janeites." (For a discussion of the controversy between "Janeites and Anti-Janeites" see Helen Hughes, "Janeism, 1813-1944," in *The Jane Austen Companion*, ed. J. David Gray (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 142-51.)

necessary to discover the complexity of her response in the reading case of her narrative language.

The present study will consider this complexity in terms of the plurality of social voices in dialogue in her work. This approach is based on Bakhtin's definition of this genre not in terms of a single structural model,<sup>2</sup> but as "a diversity of speech types . . . and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized," combined "to form a structured artistic system," a unity that cannot be identified with" any of the elements (different genres of speech and interaction) that constitute it. The novel's diversity reveals "the internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects," which includes a diversity of genres, of different social groups, professions, generations, and the ideological diversity of languages of the authorities and those opposed to them, "of various classes and of passing classes, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day" (DB, 343). As we shall see, Austen's novels combine the languages of different literary and extra-literary genres, as well as a diversity of approaches to the major ideological problems of her age. They also combine the languages of different social groups, focusing on the differences of gender and generation, and delving deeply and

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<sup>2</sup>For a definition of the novel as a distinct structure that can be contrasted to other genres such as letters or epigrams see Mikhail Bakhtin's *Fiction and the Poetics of Social Interaction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

dialogically into class conflicts among the "wandering classes," rather than presenting the whole spectrum of social classes. This study will argue that Austen's great originality lay in her transposing the cultural opposition between popular carnival and an official ideology,<sup>1</sup> with carnival's characteristic mingling of many social classes, to the tension between male and female within a limited range of classes. Austen's, then, is a *feminist* rather than a popular carnival.

Austen's narration thus puts into play artistic possibilities by which women, as members of a subordinate group, are empowered to produce their own meaning. From this perspective, I will analyze three of Austen's novels, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*. I have chosen to analyze these works because they seem to provide the best grounds for explicating what I will call Austenian irony. Each of these three novels, like all her works, considers how a different type of woman from "the wandering classes" might achieve some measure of happiness in a society inimical to women. In the three novels chosen, the search for happiness is simultaneously a process of male-centric humiliation of the

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<sup>1</sup>See Bakhtin's discussion of medieval carnival and Rabelais' artistic adaptation of its festive elements and of the language of the people to the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World*. Tr. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1981). Further references to this work will be dated HW and included in the text. Also, see Bakhtin's discussion of carnivalesque ideologies operating, however indirectly, as subversive forces in *Problems of Dostoevskii's Fiction*. Especially pp. 134-57 and 216-78. Conceptions of carnival in both these works will be discussed below, pp. 64-71.



protagonist witnessing to her personal growth.<sup>4</sup> In these novels the heroine's development is, like the depiction of even the most important moments, colored by the author's peculiar ironic stance, which I will analyze with the aid of Bakhtin's description of carnival. It will be argued that Austen adapted festive laughter to her narrative needs, shedding the male-dominant emphasis on bawdiness and the grotesque body that was typical of carnival, but retaining the ability of carnivalesque language to oppose an official ideology and thus to give the power to produce meaning, however indirectly, to the dominated. Austen's novels of feminist carnival build upon traditional Christian novels but were official ideologies of male superiority upside down by laughing at heroines. This subversive stance allows her to show women's strengths and to grant her central characters an unimpaired "perfect felicity."

On the other hand, even her most festive novels contain a strong element of realism that leads her to depict a social situation and institutions most adverse to women's assertion of their abilities. Therefore, Bakhtin's epistemologic vision needs to be placed in dialogue with the unending of the ways

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<sup>4</sup>As will be discussed below, in the three novels to be considered the hero also undergoes a process of change involving the elimination of errors committed or habitual attitudes in need of improvement; their problems, however, endure, as he speaks, "off-stage." We, as readers, witness the heroine's changes as they are occurring, while the heroine's transformations are narrated (communicated to the heroine by the heroine themself) later.

in which the seemingly powerless participate in the simulation of the same power that dominates them. From this Foucauldian perspective, I will briefly discuss Kushner's oblique depiction of discourse, limiting speech and other social practices.

Nevertheless, all theoretical considerations are merely an approximation to Kushner's resilient, unique laughter. She was one of those privileged authors who could employ the resources of written words to invite many diverse reactions; she was even more unique in her ability to create texts about women that allow readers so inclined to laugh without acquiescing in any misogynist premise. Many might and have read her from an anti-feminist perspective; and yet her novels allow feminist readings as deep and as fruitful as any. I will try to make mine worthy of the possibilities her novels offer.

## CHAPTER 2 AUSTEN'S FEMINIST CHALLENGE

Before approaching the theoretical problems involved in reading Austen's works from the viewpoint of feminist criticism, it seems worthwhile to examine how Austen has been understood in the critical tradition. The contrast between multiple critical positions will allow us to discover Austen's inclusion of various ideological values in her novels, and will lead us to a discussion of her irony in terms of her combination of diverse genres and, finally, as it is manifested in her language.

### Ideological Voices: Austen's Critique

This review of the critical literature will focus on her social and political attitudes as gendered and views of women's social role in particular, in order to uncover Austen's "heterogeneity," or multiplicity of social voices (cf. 28, 243).

### Timidity," "Inconsequence" and Conservatism

The peculiarities of Austen's shapes with the critics were evident from an early stage. Forty years after her death, G. E. Davis remarked that she was a rare phenomenon, a novelist of "great excellence" whose work very people

enjoyed reading but she never enjoyed "a loud reputation."<sup>1</sup> Apparently only some exceptional readers, like Scott or Manning, took her at all seriously. Most critics seemed to find her entertaining, but inconsequential.

This view was encouraged by her depiction by her family as a most conventional lady: her brother and nephew each published short biographies of the "authoress" stressing her "regular habits . . . and quiet and happy occupations," and extolling her self-denial and resignation.<sup>2</sup> The fact that after her death her sister, Cassandra, burned many of her letters and assumed the task must have contributed to create the myth of her innocuous elegance, for it may be safely conjectured that she preserved only what was perfectly inoffensive.<sup>3</sup> Later himself, though he called her a great

<sup>1</sup>A. Launce, "The Novels of Jane Austen," reprinted from *Blackwood Magazine*, 74 (1839), in *Pricks and Provocations*, ed. Donald C. Grey, Norton Critical Edition (New York: N. N. Norton, 1968), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>From her brother Henry Austen's "Biographical Notice of the Author," first published as a preface to the posthumous volume containing *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* in 1817; it was reprinted in Chapman's second edition of *The Novels of Jane Austen* in 1919. J. E. Austen Leigh, her nephew, included his "Memoir" in his publication of the *Lamp-Trimming Manuscript* in 1885. Even as late as 1915, this nephew's son, William, and the latter's nephew, Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, wrote *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters: A Family Record*, which, according to Frank Kermode, "presents nearly every reference to Emily Lennox," and "affords a genuine Austen-leigh family version of Jane Austen's character" (Kermode, *Jane Austen: Her Life* [New York: N. Norton's Press, 1957], pp. xix-ty).

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of how the "received" biography of Jane Austen helped to hide her radicalist leanings, see Margaret Kirkham's "The Austen Portraits and the Received Biography," in *Just Tom*, ed. Jane Austen: New Perspectives (New York:

artist, spoke of her merits in terms not far removed from those used by her relatives. Austin, he thought, "only teaches us charity for the ordinary failings of ordinary people, and sympathy with their goodness."<sup>4</sup> In this appraisal, Lewis was reflecting the typical Victorian conception of humor as benevolence<sup>5</sup> and helping to build the foundation for Austin's image among "Victorians."

Almost a hundred years after Lewis wrote the above, both D. W. Harding and G. E. Lewis attacked contemporary misconceptions of Austin's work that seem to echo Lewis' vindication of Austin's worth. Harding's essay, considered the founder of the so-called "sarcastic" school of Austin criticism, refuted the idea that Austin's work was delicate nature, "smoking with indelible lightness . . . the comic foibles and subtle weakness" of her world. Harding described her as a sensible Ironist whose novels tended to undermine the better system held by those same pastoral readers who found her works delightful. This article illustrated her dilemma "of being universally critical of people to whom she also has strong

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Robert A. White, 1983). In *Jane Austen: Fictions and Fictions* (Cambridge: The Harvard Press, 1983), pp. 53-54, Margaret Wright also outlines the severity of social condemnation of "free women" when she discusses public reactions to Austen's revelations about Mary Woltemoortcraft's life! This reaction helps explain the need felt by Jane Austen's family to stress the "domesticated" image of the author.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of the evolution of ideas of humor see pp. 51-64 below.

emotional attachments,"<sup>4</sup> though, as we shall see, he suggested the individualism of her social critiques.

G. D. Lewis, on the other hand, assumed a different facet of the image of Austen as a lightweight lady-author, the generalized attitude to her novels as the product of facile, spontaneous, intuitive work. At the time when Mrs Lewis wrote, scholars saw Austen as prone and possessed of a "sunny temper;" critics, furthermore, felt a need to "apologize for her inability to dwell on guilt and misery, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars."<sup>5</sup> G. D. Lewis argued, convincingly, that Austen must have been a serious, methodical writer who revised repeatedly in a process of "thoroughly conscious, laborious, separate draftings," and whose novels were deeply engaged in "reference to, reaction against, and borrowing from, other novels."<sup>6</sup>

After Harding and Lewis, the move toward taking Austen's novels more seriously continued. Marvin Madrick, for instance, saw irony not merely as her prime rhetorical device, but as a subjective reaction to her personal situation coloring her attitudes to life and art. Madrick traced her psychological and artistic evolution from the juvenilia to *Emma*, her last, unfinished, work. In her posthumous

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<sup>4</sup>G. H. Harding, "Regulated Retreat: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen," *Scrutiny*, 9, 4 (March, 1942), pp. 140-42.

<sup>5</sup>G. D. Lewis, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," *Scrutiny*, 10 (1942), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>G. D. Lewis, pp. 44, 85.

production he finds irony as a form of withdrawal, a defense against sentiment and morbidity, aimed at making life as "not tied to any train of consequences."<sup>27</sup> In more mature work, such as *Wilde and Forgiveness*, irony appears as a rejection of a severely regulated society, a mechanism that allows the author to "discover and eliminate . . . the free individual."<sup>28</sup> Madrick's analysis takes us through *Manfield Park*, where irony is abandoned, and *Emma*, where it is retained, to *Northanger*, where feeling is finally liberated and irony becomes "a controlled and uncompassionate instrument."<sup>29</sup> Thus Madrick continued in the Hardy tradition of seeing her social critiques as grounded in individualism, apparently seeing that the only socially critical stance that could be taken at her time was a Romantic one.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1820s and 30s critics increasingly recognized that, though she rarely sentimentized great events (like the Industrial Revolution or the Napoleonic wars), political ideology was a most significant aspect of her artistic achievement. Critics such as Alastair Duckworth reacted to

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<sup>27</sup>Karen Madrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Madrick, p. 104.

<sup>29</sup>Madrick, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup>For a short review of other significant works of the "subversive" school of Austen criticism, see Alastair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate* (Berkeley: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 7-18.

the mission of the "adversative school" by seeing Austen as a Burkean Conservative. Austen interpreted her work as centered on her heroine's moral choices in support of their cultural heritage, on the "improvement" of their "estate." In Austen, the hereditary estate where her protagonists are raised or into which some of them marry are symbols of cultural traditions that must be preserved. These estates might appear as "corrupted forms," and might be surrounded by a vulgar and corruptive world, but behind them lies the ideal society, buttressed by stable secular institutions and founded on the religious principles of Christian reticence. Austen's argument presents Austen as a defender of social continuity and tradition that would have been opposed to revolutionary change, certainly in women's rights as much as in any other sphere.

It is true that Austen typically described social relationships in country villages in terms that showed the compatibility of cultural and social ties. In this regard her view can be compared to Burke's, who "in opposition to individualist democracy . . . saw the idea of a People," conceived as a corporation, a community whose characteristic detached "the whole province of man," and from which "he can now abstract himself."<sup>11</sup> And yet Austen's opposition to "individualist democracy" was not as extreme as Burke's. To

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<sup>11</sup>Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1932* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 9.



appreciate the difference one need only consider the latter's derivation of the "Third Estate" of the French Assembly known, unlike the British House of Commons, it did not choose among the most illustrious members, but admitted petty attorneys rather than magistrates.<sup>16</sup> Whether intentional or not, a caricature of Burke's position may be seen in the episode in *Edith and Ravenshoe* where Miss Singsley scoffingly ridicules the Senate because two of their members are attorneys; Miss Singsley's jealousy will even lead her to ludicrously suggest to Percy that, if he marries Elizabeth, the portrait of her uncle should hang next to that of his great uncle, a judge, since the law belongs to the legal profession. The suggestion is that such a juxtaposition will be a demeritum (FF, 81).

Furthermore, community in Justice seems to mean, rather than a historic ideal manifested in what may be a corrupted form (in Burke's terms, a "robust and venerable custom" whose value might be in need of repair),<sup>17</sup> a potential for love and friendship that may or may not be actualized in real social groups. Respect for traditional ways of conducting relationships ("manners") is necessary so that a common ground may exist for potential relationships where individuals can moral imperative in Justice's words seems to be keeping

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<sup>16</sup>Edward Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. G. A. Pocock (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1977), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Burke, p. 31.

oneself open, when meeting strangers, to the possibility of love as *agape*, even though the potential is seldom realized. Thus, Austen's understanding of "community" seems to us to combine Platonic, dynamic Aristotelian ideas of potency and act, and a Platonic "ladder of love."<sup>24</sup> Such a view of culture and community is considerably less conservative than Burke's insatiable Platonic ideal. In Austen's narratives community does not seem to mean a fixed, national "inheritance from our forefathers,"<sup>25</sup> to be sentimentally cherished; rather, it is actualized only in a "small band of true friends" such as we find in *Emma*, and which seems even smaller in *Northanger Abbey* in *Friend and Foe*. Jane's failing is a tendency to reject the possibility of initiating relationships that are generally so rare.

Furthermore, a more dynamic understanding of community seems more suited to an analysis of Austen's work, in which conflict figures so prominently. Although the "country village" is a source of strength for the characters, whose

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<sup>24</sup>Richard Nelson states, for example, that "The thought of *Friend and Foe* may be uncovered by interpreting it in accordance with any of a variety of philosophies." Nelson interprets this novel's opening statement in the light of the "New Academy conception" which viewed the universe ordered as a unity "in accordance that all doctrines are false and therefore, by the same token, true." He also sees the evolution of personal relationships in this novel as illustration of a Platonic ladder of love, which includes love of money or companionship, love in marriage, and, at the highest level, "Platonic or Christian *agape*." ("Friend and Foe: Concept, Character, Argument and Plot," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1979): 816-37.

<sup>25</sup>Edward Burke, p. 27.

collectively shared values and social customs give them a sense of certainty in making moral choices. If it is similar usually a source of hostility. Austen often uses war as the underlying metaphor for many relationships between individuals from different social classes or families, between friends, even between members of the same family.<sup>28</sup>

Although Deane's well-known argument has been called "essentially indistinctible,"<sup>29</sup> I believe it stresses excessively the continuity between the "status" as property and as moral force in Austen's fictional universe. Raymond Williams, on the other hand, distinguished between what he calls "the two improvements" in Austen's narratives: first, the physical work involved in turning soil, stone, or timber into economic growth and profits, the "working improvement which is not seen at all" in her novels, and, second, the social improvement by which economic advantage is turned into "what is seen as a cultivated society":

What happens in *Emma*, in *Persuasion*, in *Mansfield Park*, is the development of an everyday uncomprehending morality which is in effect separable from the social basis and which, on other hands, can be turned against it.

Williams concluded that Jane Austen "never went so far" as to contrast the "two meanings of improvement" as vice and

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<sup>28</sup>For a discussion of generational conflict in Austen see Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Edward Deane: Generational Conflict in Jane Austen," *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan (Tucson, P.U.: Banner & Books, 1981) pp. 159-74.

<sup>29</sup>David Monaghan, "Introduction: Jane Austen as a Social Novelist," in *JANE AUSTEN IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT*, p. 4.

versity, but he sees her as providing "the emphasis" that others ("From Calverley to George Eliot and Matthew Arnold"), writing about a different social experience, would carry to its fruition in "not a novel but a social catastrophe."<sup>20</sup>

Following Deleworth, however, other critics would continue to stress Austen's conservatism. Marjorie Butler even placed Jane Austen squarely with the anti-Jacobin novelists, with their propaganda in defense of the status quo and their reaction against individualistic subversion of traditional values. According to Butler, Austen, a Christian conservative, held a "pessimistic view of man's nature" leading her to rely on "external authority," and to oppose "progressives, sentimentalists, revolutionaries, with their optimism about man, and their preference for spontaneous personal impulse against rules imposed from without."<sup>21</sup>

Butler's well-documented study provides an interesting picture of the cultural context for questions of man and society during the eighteenth century. But her contention that Jane Austen's novels differ from the doctary anti-Jacobins only in her narrative sophistication and "class bias" here fails to take into account the subtle social tensions that pervaded her prose, or to do justice to her complex attitude to social institutions. Butler characterizes two "camps,"

<sup>20</sup>Raymond Williams, *The English Novel: from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978), pp. 18-24.

<sup>21</sup>Marjorie Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 184-5.

conservatives and progressive individualists, partly on the basis of attitudes toward sentiment. And yet Butler herself recognizes that these attitudes were very complex during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While some conservative moralists identified Jacobin revolution with an emphasis on sentiment, actually many revolutionary writers were opposed to sentimentalism as well, for they saw it as an emphasis on the involuntary side of human conduct which encouraged inactivity and thus precluded active opposition to the status quo. Many radicals regarded sentiment as especially dangerous for women, since "the stress on feeling rather than on reason, and on fine sensation rather than on activity" encouraged passivity which led to submission.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, a radical such as Mary Wollstonecraft was particularly repelled by sentimentalism, which she felt to be often a "passive unthought delivery of feeling" fostered in women by "the hand of novelists."<sup>18</sup> Conservative writers, on the other hand, were often sentimentalists who stressed, as did Burke, Gibbon and Burke, the importance of individuals, their inability to change the course of history.<sup>19</sup> Both sentimentalism and its rejection, therefore, were eighteenth-

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<sup>17</sup>Katherine M. Bruce, *Revolution in Eighteenth Century England* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1961), p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Oxford Publishing Co.: New York, 1961), p. 48. For a discussion of the possible influence of Wollstonecraft on Austen, see pp. 13-14 below.

<sup>19</sup>Marilyn Butler, Chapter II.

century ideological phenomena that cut across all political lines. Jane Austen's attack on sentimentalism in *Emma* and *Sensibility* and elsewhere need not be seen, as does Butler, as a reaction against the revolutionary individualism that appeared to conservatives to be threatening orthodox morality. Rather, with Margaret Kirkham, we can regard Austen's distaste for sentiment as a rejection of anti-rational feelings that could particularly affect women.<sup>27</sup>

Butterworth and Butler made an important contribution to Austen criticism in correcting the excesses of the "subversive" school led by Harding and Baskin. However, they emphasized the role of conservative ideology in Austen's work to a degree that obscured her strong awareness of injustice, of the hypocrisy and incompetence of many clerics and aristocrats, and the pervasiveness of social conflicts, and thus failed to do justice to the plurality of ideological voices in her novels. As Butterworth himself argues in an essay published twelve years after *The Development of the Novels*, if Austen has been read in so many diverse and even contradictory ways, it is because she starts from many contextual origins, and does not "achieve 'universal' certainties."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen: Fictions and Fiction* (Ipswich: The Variorum Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> A. Butterworth, "Jane Austen and the Conflict of Interpretations," in *Jane Austen: New Perspectives* (New York: Collier & Miller, 1981), pp. 27-28.

One central reason for the complexity of her attitudes was her position as a female member of her social class in turbulent historical times. Therefore, in order to understand this novelist's complex attitude to social-political issues, we must look to some relatively novel issues in contemporary criticism of Jane Austen, that of her femininity.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, some of the feminist readings of Austen even startlingly unlike her. This misrepresentation may be due to the split between many feminists' stress on women's cultural "secondariness" and Austen's lack of overt protest, the complexity of her resources in handling the "woman problem." Critics such as Gilbert and Gubar, who stress women's cultural exclusion from culture, tend to see all writing by women as expressions of anger, fear and longing. As Elaine Showalter points out, "Gilbert and Gubar . . . accept the essential psychoanalytic definition of the female artist as displaced, diminished, and excluded."<sup>18</sup> This viewpoint, while allowing them to achieve brilliant insights in reading excluded or tormented authors like the Brontës and Mary Shelley, seems flawed when they turn to Jane Austen.

Gilbert and Gubar picture Austen as an angry woman who discouraged and repressed her impulse to rebellion. In their

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<sup>17</sup>David Margoshes reviews feminist criticisms of Austen in "Jane Austen and the Feminist Critique," *A Room of One's Own*, 4 (Spring 1979), 24-3.

<sup>18</sup>Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. E. Ann (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 24.

view, this impulse nevertheless surfaced in her suppressed admiration for Mrs. Harris as "the virtuous slave" in *Waverley*, or in the "sensitively" of such characters as Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine is described as full of the gothic "terror and self-loathing that results when a woman is made . . . to accept as real what contradicts her perception of her own situation."<sup>28</sup> Such a dark image is hard to square with Catherine's quiet and unassuming spirit. The novel's insistence on her ordinariness repeatedly makes the extraordinariness of heroines in both gothic and sentimental novels. Catherine's "perception of her own situation," moreover, is improved and strengthened in the narrative. She does, it is true, learn she had been deceived in her romantic musings about the manifestations of General Tilney's wickedness, but she finally comes to see that the substance of her appraisal of his had been correct. Gilbert and Gubar's failure to see Catherine's strength can be regarded as an extension of their difficulties in handling Jane Austen's fiction.

#### JANE AUSTEN AND MARY MALLONCHUK

In spite of the shortcomings of some feminist analyses of Austen, considerable advances have been made in the understanding of the author's views on women. Not all feminist critics of Austen have taken the dark, auxiliary

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<sup>28</sup>James Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 145.



view, probably the most influential of the recent feminist readings of Austen, is one that stresses her nationalism. The success of this view has been such that the old, pre-vailing image of the conventional, epistolary Jane Austen has been superseded by a new, more complex figure, perhaps equally mythical, "a curious cross between Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft: a politically sophisticated and highly committed Tory idealist . . . and, simultaneously, a passionate supporter of contemporary radical ideas (about) women."<sup>20</sup>

It was Margaret Kirkham who gave lasting force to this trend when she tacitly accepted Butler's depiction of the novelist as a Tory in all other matters, while proposing that Austen held revolutionary views with regard to sexual conduct and the identity and needed roles of women. Although one half of this image of the author, the conception of Austen as a staunch conservative, needs to be tempered by a realization of her carnivalesque nature (see pp. 41-42 below), the other half, the postulation of her radical feminism represents a most significant breakthrough in the evolution of Austen criticism. Kirkham accepts the picture of Austen as a "true daughter of the Church of England," but argues that the thought of such men as Bishop Butler had reconciled Christian beliefs with a natural grounding of morality on reason, thus

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<sup>20</sup>Kate Falkenberg, "Jane Austen and the Comic Negative," in *Emma Reading Women's Writing*, ed. Sue Roe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 35.

making religion compatible with rationalism. This made it possible for conservative feminists like Norton to "find common ground on morals with less orthodox ones like Mary Wollstonecraft."<sup>41</sup>

Kirkham's approach was to consider Wollstonecraft's ideas as an ideological starting point for reconstructing Norton's positions on women's problems. If one reverses the procedure, regarding the earlier author, Wollstonecraft, while keeping in mind the works of the later one, Norton, the likeness is confirmed. For example, reading Wollstonecraft's repeated denunciations of the idea that planning sex is women's major role in life inevitably brings to mind Miss Montague's efforts to Eliza Grey. Nor can we missed *Vindication's* many injunctions to women to maintain robust health through exercise without remembering, not only Elizabeth Bennet's long walk to Metherfield across muddy fields to see the dying Jane,<sup>42</sup> but also Catherine Morland's love of "walking down the green slope at the back of the house" when she was a child (NA, 14). Some conservative writers of conduct books for women may have shared Norton's positive view of strenuous exercise, but they, like Henry Tilney, painted young ladies' physical exertions in delicate colors. Catherine herself naively

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<sup>41</sup>Kirkham, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> *Pride and Prejudice*. In *The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 41. All further references to Jane Austen's novels will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

distressed Henry of the nation that she needed such delicate feelings as an antidote for Clara is easier to be induced to assent: "I do not want any such pursuit to get me out of doors. The pleasure of walking and breathing fresh air is enough for me, and in fine weather I am not away then half my time.--Kama says, I am never within" (38, 174).

Quite often, a passage in *Vindication* will bring to the sensitive Austen reader vivid echoes of the attitudes of one of her heroines. Thus, for instance, Wollstonecraft's discussion of many young women's interest in soldiers<sup>21</sup> reminds one of Lydia Bennet's fascination with soldiers. Again, when the essayist remarks that it is "the course of nature" that "friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love,"<sup>22</sup> she could be imagined as an Eliza Bennet with a variation, trying to make her change her romantic view on love.

We may never know whether Austen was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas, or whether the two authors' attitudes to women had been shaped through convergent positions to their historical context. At any rate, the very conception of the protagonist of *Emma*, her situation and major failings, could have been suggested to Austen (whether or not it did so happen) by ideas contained in such statements by Wollstonecraft as these:

<sup>21</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>22</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 54.

...[the] youth [women's] sensitivities are not brought forward by education; and having no serious scientific study, if they have natural capacity it is turned too soon on life and manners.

The most striking similarity of Vlade is found in passages exhibiting sensitivity to women's situation with considerations of social class. In the following passage in *Vladislav* about the effect of business on spoiled young women we also find parallels to an episode from *Knap*.

I have seen [a young lady] insult a worthy old gentleman, who experienced misfortunes and was dependent on her ostentatious beauty. And who, in better days, had claims on her gentleness.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, in *See Bill* Kate insults Miss Bates, who, as Mr. Fitzgibbon reveals later, has become dependent on the generosity of her neighbors, and who has known Kate in better days, when Miss Bates was rich and "her action was an honour."<sup>17</sup> (8, 375).

We can also hear in Austen echoes of Wollstonecraft's criticisms of hypocritical attitudes toward the landed classes

One class pretends on another; for all are vying to procure respect on account of their property; and property, once gained, will procure the respect due only to talents and virtue.<sup>18</sup>

Compare this statement to Elizabeth Bennet's determination not to be swayed by the class-consciousness alone felt by

<sup>16</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vladislav*, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vladislav*, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vladislav*, p. 144.

Marie and Sir William Lucas as they prepare to meet the very rich and powerful Lady Catherine:

[Elizabeth] had heard nothing of Lady Catherine that spoke her equal from any antipathetic balance of directions virtue, and the more establishment of money and rank she thought she could witness without trepidation (PP, 182).

Austen's skepticism of those who subordinate the value of individuals to considerations of rank and fortune places her close to Woolstonecraft. Furthermore, in Austen's fictional world social relationships are not seen as wholly settled and transitional. Austen's plots record, not universally, easy "changes of fortune--the facts of general change and of a certain mobility--which were affecting the landed families at this time."<sup>28</sup>

There are, however, obvious differences between Austen and Woolstonecraft. For one thing, it seems irrefutable that Austen was more inclined to stress the importance of manners and the value of the network of social relationships, of the community as the proper framework for the individual, than was Woolstonecraft. (From a narrative standpoint, she needed the stability of manners as a common language used as a basic point of reference when recording the development of relationships of love and friendship.) In these respects she was more conservative. In Woolstonecraft's writings the reader often gets a glimpse of her unconventional attitude toward female sexual freedom. For example, she ridicules the idea

<sup>28</sup> E. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

that it is indicative for women "to have the common appetites of human nature."<sup>25</sup> The greater openness of her stance may seem to today's readers more modern, more in accordance with the individualism of urban, industrial culture, than Austen's general attitude; Austen, however, was probably shaping a later trend toward openness in sexual matters. Although, as said above, sexuality represents a central energy in her fiction, she rarely alludes to it directly.

And yet Austen's basic conception of women's sexuality does not seem very different from Wollstonecraft's. Several of Austen's characters act motivated by sexual desire, disregarding conventions. Although their actions are not condoned, two of them, Colonel Brandon's ward and Miss Lucy, are presented as victims of their own inexperience and of male manipulativeness. Austen does not condemn women's sexual feelings as confused or degrading, as conservative moralists tend to do. Even a shameless young woman like Lydia Bennet appears to be excused after Wollstonecraft's condemnation of a style of young women's education in which, "Every thing that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind."<sup>26</sup> In similar terms Elizabeth explains Lydia's "wickedness to live with Wickham" before marriage as a result of her being

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<sup>25</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 55.

allowed to dispose of her time as she best felt and  
 (FIVE) Mrs. Bennet... Since the ----shire were first  
 quartered in Maryton... (she) has been doing every  
 thing in her power, by thinking and talking (only  
 about love, dissipation and officers), to give  
 quarters--what shall I call IT? susceptibility to her  
 feelings! WHICH are certainly lively enough (PP,  
 281-82)...

Perhaps because Lydia is a victim of a mistaken education,  
 Austen allows her to be received in Longbourn after her  
 marriage, to Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins' scornful, and  
 permits her to go on merrily with her venous life.

Another topic on which there is more similarity between  
 Austen and Wollstonecraft that it would at first appear is  
 women's external and conjugal function. Wollstonecraft's  
 does not appear as a depressing factor, either in Austen's  
 novels or, in spite of Wollstonecraft's popular image, in the  
 latter's work.<sup>42</sup> Apparently we are still very far, in the late

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<sup>42</sup>One reason for this acceptance of domestic roles may  
 be found in the fact that in the eighteenth century,  
 especially in rural areas, women still enjoyed a certain  
 economic independence from men, though the rapid  
 industrialization would in the following century put an end  
 to such domestic industries. This independence was a legacy  
 of the seventeenth century, in which, according to Alice  
 Clark, "the idea is seldom encountered that a man supports  
 his wife; husband and wife were then mutually dependent and  
 together supported their children" (Working Life of Women in  
 the Seventeenth Century, *Reprints of Economic Classics* (New  
 York: Frank Cass, 1964), p. 12. There is much to be learned  
 as one Charlotte Lucas enjoying the cheer of "her home and  
 her housekeeping, her parish and her poultry": her enjoyment  
 in administering these "necessaries" and, presumably, the  
 returns she obtained from the sale of dairy products,  
 apparently helped to set her marriage to the devoted Collins  
 (PP, 284). The cited Lawrence Stone on the employment of lower-  
 class women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries  
 Stone further observes that "in the eighteenth and early  
 nineteenth centuries... the lower-class wife managed the  
 domestic economy... and regardless of how her husband treated

eighteenth century, from a sense of claustrophobia in the "feminine mystique." Although Wollstonecraft warns that mothers should not make their children the sole reason for their existence, she admits that "the rearing of children...has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of women."<sup>42</sup> The constant cry goes to women is "Instruction to acquire 'sufficient useful employment,' and the images of women usefully employed, educated, interested in reading, generally refer us to contented domestic women: 'I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station, ... the happiest as well as the most respectable situation in the world, ... [adding] a taste for literature to these a little variety and interest into social amusements.'<sup>43</sup> It is just this idyllic picture that we do not find in Austen. Indeed, in Austen's fictions very few individuals play either the wife or the parental role successfully.<sup>44</sup> In consequence, although

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her in terms of wisdom or deference, she was at least an important economic asset." (*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England--1600-1800* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1979), pp. 137-40.) Stone does not refer to the economic independence of women of the "middle classes," however, the group to which both Austen and Wollstonecraft mostly alluded.

<sup>42</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Education*, p. 131.

<sup>43</sup>Wollstonecraft, *Education*, p. 148.

<sup>44</sup>As Abigail Bushworth summarizes it, critics have pointed out that "Through the failure of parents properly to provide for their children the typical Austen heroines is deprived of a secure inheritance and called upon early in life to act as a 'master of self-responsible moral judgment'" (*The*



the ending of each novel predicts that the protagonists will achieve perfect conjugal happiness, their chances appear slim, judging by the examples we have seen above.

However, on the need for additional social roles for women, a topic on which Helstonecraft takes a broader's attitude, the novelist is silent. While the notion of *vindication* insists that women of superior talents "have not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence,"<sup>42</sup> it is clear that Austen's heroines do not view "any ambition to be admitted into the professions, to emerge as authors or to join the army."<sup>43</sup> Not one of the female characters in Austen's novels ever expresses yearnings that could be considered the precursors to Jane Eyre's passionate apology for her own discontent.<sup>44</sup> This silence is the more surprising because, although they do not dwell on the fact, Austen's women seem to have a clear

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*Depression of the Female*, p. 8). I would, like Duckworth, but for reasons different from his, reject the view that Austen's response "to the debased world she encountered" is to have her heroines fall back exclusively on their own resources as individuals. The novelist never seems to doubt that the cultured and social world, whatever its faults, inconspicuously provides the grounds for the individual self. On the other hand, I believe Austen was more critical of the culture that regularly produced either tyrannical or negligent parents than Duckworth allows.

<sup>42</sup>Helstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 145.

<sup>43</sup>David Nye, "Jane Austen and the Fiction of Women," in *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, p. 120.

<sup>44</sup>See Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Chapman Press, 1918), pp. 111-13.

perception of their restrictions. In *India and Her Children*, for example, the territorial voice acknowledges that marriage "was the only honorable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune," and that "however uncertain of giving happiness, it must be their planned and prescribed preservation from want" (PP, 119-20). In *East Java* Firdaus finds himself in a career as governor, the same pursuit which Jane Eyre faced as contradictory; Jane Firdaus compares it to slavery (II, 100). In *Paradise Lost* Elliot rejects the old stereotype of women's inconsistency and attributes the feminine tendency to have longer than men, beyond hope, to a lack of mobility and of interesting occupations. Why then, do these women fail to protest against their situations?

As we shall see, part of the reason why Austen is nearly silent about the injustice of women's social situation is her determination to write comedies about women whose fates are ordinary, rather than tragedies about unaccomplished heroines and heroines. Nevertheless, a basic reason for her choice of genre has to be found in her attitude to society, an attitude that is at the root of the plurality of ideological voices in her narratives. Let us now explore some critical exploitations of her social ideology that attempt to recognize various ideological positions interacting in her work.

#### THE ASSAULTS OF IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN AUSTEN

One of the first critics to push conflict at the center of Austen's fiction was Anne Wilson, who in 1918 spoke of her

oscillation between "two views of life whose conflict made her art." On the one hand, Wilson found a loving idealism animating her refinement into country values, a tendency which reached its purest manifestation in *Mansfield Park*. On the other hand, he observed a "splendid defiance of freedom, of personality and energy," of which the best example is *Fanny and Elizabeth*.<sup>42</sup> The former "view of life" is grounded on an acquiescence to prevalent beliefs, while the latter would represent self-assertion in the face of collective values. Austen's work would appear to have suffered from her inability to choose between the two positions, between a stoic modesty and a Romantic imagination: this inability would have led her to achieve a limited vision of life. And yet the same "unresolved temperamental conflict" that led to this "disturbing contradiction" was, paradoxically, the source of her "masterly satirist and persuasive irony."

At least one feminist critic, Alison Walkow, has recently belabored in Wilson's footsteps. Walkow adds the element of "dark rage" against women's exclusion to Austen's defense of individual freedom, and dispense the view of her idealism to that of courage under extreme duress. As a result, Walkow's position can be summarized by reference to two of her metaphors: Austen as submerger ("Austen was identified with a category of women whose lives included the

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<sup>42</sup>Angus Wilson, "The Neighbourhood of Mansfield, Conflicts in Jane Austen's Novels," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. R. C. Bowdler (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), p. 161.

and, the beleaguered servant, the unfettered . . . and even  
 soldiers under external discipline<sup>45</sup>) and as soldier ("Austenian  
 joy" is "a comedic gift" that shows her vigor and resilience  
 "under prolonged adversity. It is a capacity similar to the  
 imaginative courage of a soldier who rejoices when a single  
 bird sings during a lull in the bombing.")<sup>46</sup> To Holloway, the  
 novelist's work is all the more admirable for the magnificent  
 restraint of the novelist's passionate protest.

Robert K. Pollman, on the other hand, has approached  
 Austen as a comic writer uniting morality and imagination and  
 proposing a comic compromise between self-questioning and  
 social responsibility: "Her comedy of union turns out to be  
 the witty celebration of potent individualism embracing the  
 world."<sup>47</sup> His discussion, however, never abandons the  
 paradoxical view of Austen, stressing her "divided  
 intentions," and balancing her "comic union" against her  
 "wistful faith." Pollman attributed the condemnation of Mary  
 Crawford's and Anne Woodhouse's actions by Austen's narrators  
 to her fear of the comic imagination as "a Protestantism that  
 needed control."<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, Anne's sin is not her

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<sup>45</sup>William Holloway, Jane Austen and the Fearless of  
 Goodness (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,  
 1981), p. 27.

<sup>46</sup>Holloway, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup>Robert K. Pollman, "Jane Austen's Comedy," The Jane  
 Austen Companion, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup>Pollman, p. 43.

Imagination, but, as we shall discuss, her use of it to justify her worst mistakes. But is Mary Crawford's worst failing her witty imagination, but her excessive regard for money and social status. Fulkerson notes that Austen found her own "power of comedy" makes him describe her as almost schizophrenically divided between a penchant for ridicule and a respect for moral order. Such a conception of the novelist impermanates the understanding of the dialogue between divergent viewpoints that makes her irony so rich and complex.

Another critic, James Thompson, has recently contributed to the dualistic view of Austen by portraying her as a novelist writing against subjectivity but promoting it, reproducing it. Thompson uses the theories of Lukacs and his followers to assign what he sees as Austen's *double* (her understanding of the world in terms of subject/object, society/individual) as a form of bourgeois ideology, and thus the result of alienation and reification caused by commodity production. Thus, "her novels . . . even while they appear to celebrate the gentry's code of nostalgic paternalism . . . recreate the essential ideological contradiction between the rhetoric of social obligation and the schizoastatic experience of individuality and interiority."<sup>11</sup> Austen's "domestic love story" serves to "affirm the ideological contradiction between social responsibility and private withdrawal," since intimacy

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<sup>11</sup>James Thompson, *Between Self and World* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 1988), p. 12.

appears as "the private 'solution' to alienation and the subjectification of social relations."<sup>20</sup>

All four of these approaches to Austen's work consider her achievement as grounded on paradox. Their refusal to reduce her ideological complexity to a single conviction is commendable. There may be, however, ways in which the multiplicity of ideological voices in Austen's work can be understood as dialogic complexity, rather than reduced to two distinct, discrete "sides," as Julia Prescott Brown observes, ideological voices merge in Austenian irony: "Through irony, morality and the imagination are defined jointly; in Jane Austen they become interdependent faculties."<sup>21</sup> I believe Austen's irony can be understood both as a complex attitude manifested in her language, and as the result of her superimposing literary genres which already incorporate moral and philosophical thought and the play of the imagination. Let us consider the major generic ingredients present in her irony before proceeding to characterize her ironic language.

#### Genres in Austen

Without attempting to refer to all her generic influences, I will merely point out that various critics have interpreted her novels in the light of (or by opposition to) works from such literary and extra-literary genres as the

<sup>20</sup>Thompson, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup>Julia Prescott Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 19.

political essay (Burke, Mollatenesscraft), the works of social philosophers (Bishop Butler and others),<sup>16</sup> various plays,<sup>17</sup> and even, recently, the conduct book.<sup>18</sup> I will here focus on Austen's use of the genres of the novel of growth or Bildungsroman, the sentimental novel and satire.<sup>19</sup>

#### Jane Austen's Bildungsromans

The genre of the Bildungsroman, as Bakhtin describes it, is one in which "individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence." The psychological growth of her characters occurs in a social framework, in ways comparable to the evolution of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, in whom we witness "the emergence of a new man."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Cr., in addition to Kirkham's *Imagined and Fictional*, Kenneth Sauer's *"Fiction and Progress": A Study in Artistic Economy* (Berkeley: Twayne Publishers, 1985) pp. 14-15.

<sup>17</sup>Margaret Kirkham, for instance, sees Austen utilizing the treatment of women in Schopenhauer's plays (cf. *Jane Austen: Fiction and Fiction*).

<sup>18</sup>Cr. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup>For a lengthy study of influences on Austen, see Frank W. Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Predecessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913). Kenneth Sauer's *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion* provides a critical approach to Austen's novels through her references and allusion. A brief discussion of the relation between Austen's readings and her novels can be found in Margaret Soody's "Jane Austen's Reading," *The Jane Austen Companion*, pp. 147-61.

<sup>20</sup>K. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Vern W. Wagon, eds. Caryl Chesson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986) p. 12.

In a sense, of course, the category of Bildungsroman can contain novels of feminine development only with difficulty. In order to grow and mature, women must inevitably face a cultural tradition that places severe limitations on their social participation. This makes them problematic protagonists of a type of novel centrally concerned with the interaction of the individual with social forces. Is the "northern model of organic growth," as we encounter "the possibility of individual achievement and social integration."<sup>2</sup> In the typical Bildungsroman the hero leaves home, explores the social milieu, decides between a range of social options, struggles to attain certain conditions. On the other hand, women in fiction of the same period

are generally unable to leave home for an independent life in the city. When they do, they are not free to explore more frequently, they merely exchange one domestic sphere for another while the young hero moves through the city, the young heroine strolls down the country lane.<sup>3</sup>

Such limitations make it difficult to tell the story of a woman's maturation through the adventures of the Bildungsroman.

And yet Austen developed her own model, in which her feminine characters underwent a process of growth. This process can be compared to the classic conception of Bildung.

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsh, and Elizabeth Langland, "Introduction," *The Woman in Fiction: A Study of Female Development*, eds. Abel, Hirsh and Langland (Newaven: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Abel, Hirsh and Langland, p. 8.



for they realized at least some of their emotional, intellectual and moral potentialities and were invariably brought to the point where they could "accept a responsible role in a friendly social community."<sup>42</sup> This role was always a conjugal and domestic one, however; if Austen's needs went no further than this, they would indeed be liable to the accusation of being limited. To develop in order to fill the slot which was already predestined for a character's life, to undergo pain and conflicts only in order to accept a ready-made role, would be senseless. If such were the case, Austen would almost qualify as the writer of "cheap adventure novels," in which, according to Redfern, time leaves no traces on the hero, for "at the end of the novel that initial equilibrium that had been destroyed by chance is restored once again."<sup>43</sup>

Austen's mission to this quandary was double. First, she effected a radical transformation of the ideological world as she found it by taking upon the subjective surface of her novels, the subjects of perception, emotion and moral choice. Her narratives presented her female protagonists undergoing subjective evolutions that showed them to be the moral and intellectual agents of the action. In Austen's *Elizabeth Bennet*, then, it could be said that the "emergence of the new man"

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<sup>42</sup>Amel, Birch and Langland, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>X. Redfern, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 144. Further references to this work will be marked RDB and included in the text.

occurs subjectively in the reader. The feminine characters do not become the objects of men; they are revealed to be such, as both the men and the women characters realize. Second, she sees this growth occur in the heroines of the three novels as will analyze in women's self-revelation with a strong element of satire. As we shall see, in each of the episodes of education the heroine undergoes a carnivalesque "awakening." Let us discuss the first of Austen's editions in relation to her use of the tradition of the sentimental novel, and the second in relation to her specific sense of satire.

#### The Sentimental Novel and Women's Subjectivity

Austen's resolute affirmation of women's equality was, if not totally unprecedented, at least much more radical than attitudes toward women characters shown by the novelists who preceded her. Nancy Armstrong has recently argued that Richardson's *Pamela* introduces a form of feminine subjectivity that will become normative, a model for the bourgeois individual.<sup>42</sup> However that may be, the subjectivity of Richardson's heroine was strongly colored by what J.M. G. Tompkins calls the "gesture of submission" to males.<sup>43</sup> In Richardson's epistolary novels the action is seen from the heroines' point of view, thus it may seem that her

<sup>42</sup>Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel, Chapter 2.

<sup>43</sup>J. M. G. Tompkins, The Sensational Design in England, 1740-1800 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1945), p. 28.

subjectivity establishes the moral and intellectual norm. Nevertheless, although Fanny tells her own story, her voice does not originate in her own desire. For Fanny does not desire,<sup>27</sup> does not choose and does not act, except in reaction to Mr. F's desire. The content of her consciousness is almost all response, and response of a socially conditioned kind within a moral and religious framework.

Fanny, in fact, follows the dictum of another of Richardson's characters, Mr Charles Grandison, when the latter recommends that women after marriage turn from "over-lively mistresses" to "obedient wives."<sup>28</sup> This great and good can be Richardson's early heroine, the sterling character created in order to satisfy those who wanted the novelist to create a "good" hero after the profligate Mr. F and Levenson. Mr Charles, "the most noble of men," focuses upon women

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<sup>27</sup>There is a suggestion in Armstrong's reading of the novel that, although Fanny does not feel sexual desire, she nevertheless implicitly desires a domestic, safely, bourgeois situation. As Armstrong points out, the young girl's rejection of Mr. F's advances is contrasted to Mrs Jackson's "verdict of common sense," according to which it is "natural for a gentleman to love a pretty woman" (Armstrong, p. 124). But in neither of the two attitudes is there any recognition of Fanny's own sexual desires. In Mrs Jackson's speech, acceptable conduct is dictated by the need to satisfy gentlemen's feelings, not those of pretty women, and Fanny is only considering the question of morality. If Fanny does not motivated by a desire to be her father's wife rather than lover (which seems very plausible, in spite of the text's rhetoric), she nevertheless appears to have no awareness of her own sexual needs, but only of moral and social considerations.

<sup>28</sup>Richardson, *Mr Charles Grandison*, Part II, No. III, p. 314. All further references to this novel are to this same volume and will be included in the text.

witless (p. 421), for he believes that silence is admirable in women (p. 129), who were created in order to delight men, "not to torment us" (p. 274); his chivalry nevertheless moves him to hold that men should honor women, who are gentle, weak, dependent, and dependent not in words (p. 129). His mother, Charlotte, is the novel's dominant, often put to shame by her brother's superior reasoning powers, and destined to lose her too lively sense of humor in deference to her ridiculous, elderly husband. Though Charlotte resists her brother's influence, his greatness dwells the women. As Harriet Byron says to Charlotte: "O how great is he! And how little are we!" And when Charlotte protests that "your pretty imagination is always at work to aggrandize the man," Harriet rebukes her, "You are not generous, Charlotte" (p. 144), suggesting that something very close to envy prevents Charlotte from acknowledging her brother's superiority.

Harriet Byron constitutes a subject of perception whose justification for existing seems to be to secure the superiority of her lover. This position of the heroine's subjectivity was continued in novelistic fashion by Fanny Hursey, whose *Editha*, for example, stands in awe and reverence of "the best of me," her adoptive father, Mr. Villars, and later of the man who will be her husband, Lord Grville. Thus her subjectivity, though central in the novel, is also subordinated under a superior (male) man.

Faced with the humiliating image of femininity they encountered at every turn, women novelists adhering to different political camps ultimately made a virtue of necessity, idealizing their own attitude of submission as evidence of a subtle, uniquely feminine spirituality. According to F.M.S. Tompkins, even this posture of submission, a trademark of sentimentalism, was not enough:

By an act of will [oppressed females] abrogate reason, quell dissentism, and not only accept but approve the fiat they bow to . . . Fanny Burney's Mrs Tyrold "considered the vow taken at the altar to her husband as a voluntary Vowal would have said was taken to her Father; and no dissent is serious enough, in her mind, the least deviation from his will."<sup>41</sup>

It is true that women novelists tended to counterbalance such traditionalist positions, so that recommendations of submission often appear tempered by an unconventional attitude toward sexist stereotypes. Burney's Mrs Tyrold herself is the strong spouse in her marriage, for instance, while her husband is the weak one: "Mr Tyrold reserved while he softened the rigid virtues of his wife, she adorned while she fortified the willing humility of her husband."<sup>42</sup>

As Claudia Johnson has argued, many women novelists ridiculed freckish feminist characters (such as Harriet Freke in Eliza Follen's *Belinda*) as a rhetorical device to produce an

<sup>41</sup>F. M. S. Tompkins, *op. cit.* (Tompkins is quoting from Burney's *Camilla*, Vol. 1, Chapter 1.)

<sup>42</sup>Fanny Burney, *Camilla, a Picture of Youth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1771), p. 3.

undevoted efforts feminist speeches at times convincingly "expose what genuinely is irrational about the code of female duty." Similarly, in Murray's *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties* "the anti-heroine's feminist ravings, though duly dismissed by 'sensible' characters, provide accurate running commentary on the humiliations and injustices suffered throughout the novel by the heroine, Eliza."<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, in Murray's *Caecilia* and *Geacilia* we find evidence of the heroine's resentment against the too scrupulous moral demands which make of their charity and obedience, while in all Murray's novels heroines appear to be in constant jeopardy due to men's insensitiveness. In *Franklin* the heroine's submission before male authority provides the framework in which the novel protests against the injustice of sexual harassment while representing female weakness and helplessness.<sup>18</sup> As we shall see, even novels by radical feminists tended to present women as fragile, although in works by Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Wroe it is "the evils (women)

<sup>17</sup>Givette Johnson, p. 18-21.

<sup>18</sup>On the other hand, Franklin's constant need of male protection against sexual harassment may be seen as a denunciation of "women's social vulnerability": as Judy Sussman put it, "Women's Identity [women] valued as male status, but this in itself is shown as a hazardous source of identity" (*Franklin* [Tucson, N. J.: Barnes & Noble, 1967], p. 27).

are subject to nature," rather than feminine nature itself, that degrades and weakens them.<sup>15</sup>

Austen's treatment of the heroine's subjectivity presents a strong contrast to previous depictions of female protagonists. In her fiction we find, unconsciously and unapologetically, women as subjects, as the focus of perception of events, who relate to men on the grounds of equality. Thus, for example, both Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy will have to mature before they reach an understanding, and each has a lasting moral effect on the other, although Darcy, by his own admission, needs a more profound and painful reeducation. Even in Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, where the heroines act as the heroines' mentors, the irony ultimately turns against them: as we shall see, both hero and heroine are forced to grow in moral terms. Henry Tilney will find that, although he has been pretending to Catherine for suspecting his father of being a genuine wife-swearer, the General's greed and apathy make his easily monstrous; Henry must defy his father to reach effective moral adulthood. In Persuasion Mr. Knightley, much older and wiser than the title character, must nevertheless come to an understanding of his own motivations in reportedly convincing the heroine: he must acquire a sense of the futility of pretending to the young, while the reader becomes

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<sup>15</sup> The Women of Rome, or Maria, by William Godeau, ed. Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Women (London, 1722; Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), Vol. 3, p. 37 [First published in 1708].

overs of the ways in which supposed "plain-dealing" is often partly aimed at manipulating others. All Austen's heroes and heroines, in these three novels at least, will become the better of the heroine's doing.

In some of Austen's novels the intellectual and/or moral superiority of the heroine protagonists also allowed the author to present a series of subjective lessons. One of these was the inadequacy of a social situation in which women could not secure roles for which they seemed naturally capable. For who could deny that Elizabeth Bennet, given the necessary training, would preside over the Longbourn estate, with its face and tenants, better than Collins could ever hope to do? Or that Eliza Dashwood, if she had access to the required education, could in time come to preach better sermons than Edward Ferrars? Or that Jane Fairfax Churchill might manage Rosamond and its affairs more profitably than Frank Churchill, who will someday inherit it? Or that Rushmore Abbey would have been more hospitably and artistically administered if Eleanor Tilney had been allowed a more than nominal role as its mistress? The fact that so many of Austen's excellent heroine characters will be barred from authority or from the professions, will even have to submit to immoral or inept males, contradicts the promised happiness at the conclusion of each novel. Nevertheless, this contradiction between women's abilities and their conventional destinies is built into each of the narratives in a different



way. As we shall see, the happy ending generally involves some form of feminist utopia which, like all utopias, also functions as an indictment of social reality.

These utopias allow women to act as subjects who are the equals of men by instituting a morality of Christian community that recognizes women's full moral and intellectual equality. Such equality, of course, may pay lip-service to what makes Austen's morality radically different is the fact that, against the patriarchal ideology of most male culture, against the ambivalent attitude of her "alabor correlates" who presented women's subjectivity subordinated to men, and who justified this state of things either on the grounds of a natural fate or on the effect of education, Austen seems to be affirming both women's unrecognized strengths and the equal capability of men and women. At the same time, her fiction recognizes that any forces in her culture assert male superiority. Her ironic treatment of this assertion as myth through her analysis on marriage is the subject of her entire *Austen's Novels as Satire*.

When Austen's characters experience "flashes of recognition" in the "brief epiphanic moments [that] often replace the continuous unfolding of an action" in feminist narratives of development,<sup>25</sup> the climax is often comic. It is so, for instance, when Jane realizes the source of her fear that Mr. R. may be loved by Mr. Knightley: "It dashed through

<sup>25</sup>Adel, Kirsch and Langford, p. 12.

her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself" (II, 404). And of course, Catherine Morland's growth to maturity with Henry Tilney's aid is fraught with ludicrous moments. Elizabeth Bennet herself, when she must break the news to Jane that her former dislike for Darcy has turned to love, takes fun of the growth of her own emotion: to Jane's question, "Will you tell us how long you have loved him?" she answers, "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I first date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (III, 373).<sup>2</sup>

The humorous tone of many of her characters' "moments of truth" has to do with the fact that their education involves amending their own misconceptions. It may be safely said that almost all of Austen's major characters are, in large or small measure, somehow deluded. (I believe the only exception is Anne Elliot, whose emotional growth involves not so much an improvement in perception and judgment as the recovery of hope for happiness.) According to Trypan, *Sensibility* provides a good model for satire by using it to "correct the vices and follies

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<sup>2</sup>Those who have found in this speech grounds for holding that Elizabeth is kidding herself into believing she loves Darcy because she has been denied by his wealth and power, fail to realize the "distract of the serious tone" in *Eliza and Frederick*. In this novel, more than in any other, Austen has an attitude akin to that *Melville* has described as the understanding "that hypochondy and life never laugh but wear a serious mask" (189, 48).

of his time";<sup>12</sup> Austen's novels can be seen as satires leading the reader on a journey for the psychosexual investigation of a definition that has its roots in "class and notions of her time."

Austen's satire, however, differs from Dryden's, Swift's or Pope's in that she does not share the reverence they show toward an epic past. These satirical writers generally hold the greatness of classical ages as a measure against which their own time came up short. This longing appears in Dryden and Pope as a formal device: they produce mock-epic poems by pitting an epic style and the greatness of past authors against the shortcomings of tasks or against the pettiness of the quarrel over Archibald Douglas's loan.<sup>13</sup> Such is the nature, for instance, of Dryden's "Mac Flecknoe, or a Satire upon the Four-Knot Protestant Poet," in which both Richard Flecknoe and Thomas Shadwell are accused of "Wall stupidity" and disparaged by comparison with Jonson.<sup>14</sup> Pope, especially, acknowledges "the passing gap that separates modern pretensions to taste from their classical forebears."<sup>15</sup> Although in "A Rime

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<sup>12</sup>John Dryden, "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Kerr (New York: Russell & Russell, 1911), Vol. II, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Ian Jack, *Augustan Satire: Selection and Imitation in English Poetry--1680-1740* (Berkeley: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 42-43, and 73-84.

<sup>14</sup>John Dryden, "Mac Flecknoe," in *Drama--Form and Poem* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 12-13.

<sup>15</sup>David Nye, *Satire and Power: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Satire* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987).

"Proposal" Swift may be writing against the status quo, but his anti-colonialism may be as strong as his condemnation of the Irish. In *The Battle of the Books* the belief in the ridiculous stature of modern times is compared to the classical past as in the mock-heroic style. Fielding's *Tom Jones*, in the episode of the churchyard fight involving Molly Seagrim (Book IV, Ch. 4), also plays on the contrast between "the heroic style" and a violent brawl among low-class characters. This conventional type of satire, by upholding heroic and classical stature, indirectly serves to uphold the status quo and reinforce officialdom.

To such critics as D. C. Maccke, only the mock-heroic deserves the title of satire. A burlesque such as *Madhouse*, which deals with a "presumed 'high' victim" in a "low style," and travesty, "a deliberately inept imitation of a high style or manner," are both lacking "any satirical intention," being "merely amusing or ventrally destructive or both," and "no more than to be only minimally ironical."<sup>20</sup> Such criticism can discuss the importance of works that undermine official ideology in general and sexist or patriarchal hegemony in particular only by applying the labels of "high" and "low" inappropriately. Such discussions can hardly be invoked when dealing with works that seek precisely to invert greatness and mediocrity.

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<sup>20</sup>D. C. Maccke, *The Consensus of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 79.

Austen's satirical stance is more similar to that of Butler in *Madhuca* than to Dryden's, Swift's or Pope's. With Butler, Austen shares a radically skeptical attitude toward all forms of heroism. Austen and Butler are also similar in tone. As Dryden put it, Butler's work was particularly remarkable for its "brisk[ing] vigor" and "sustained energy."<sup>12</sup> These are characteristics of Austen's prose as well; another trait common to the two authors is their careful, vivid representation of incidents (stranger in the three novellas we will discuss than in her other three novels).

Both in Butler's poem and in his prose "characters" we find a Socratic emphasis on the need to verify statements "by immediate experience."<sup>13</sup> But his Socratic skepticism differs from that of others like Browne and Elzevill in that he was more "deeply conscious of the folly, hypocrisy and guiltiness of man...."

What depressed him, as it was to impress Swift, was man's proneness to delusion. 'There are but few truths in the world,' he said, 'but millions of errors and follies, which prevail with the opinion of the world.'<sup>14</sup>

Butler is aware of man's "fatal love" for "their own notions," their "confounding those 'pictures of things in the imagin-

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<sup>12</sup>John Dryden, "A Discourse Concerning . . . Nature," p. 28.

<sup>13</sup>John Wilders, "Introduction," James Butler's *Madhuca*, ed. Wilders (Harvard Classics Press, 1977), p. xiv-xli.

tion' with 'their originals in Nature.'<sup>12</sup> This is a realization that can be seen at work in Austen's work as well, for in her fiction we find that pride, prejudice (obviously, *Pride and Prejudice*), love (*Northanger Abbey*), the reading of gothic novels (*Northanger Abbey*), or of romantic novels and poetry (*Rama and Sensitive*), or idleness combined with "a disposition to think a little too well of herself" (*Emma*) can lead characters to misperceive what they experience. While Butler's poem seems aimed at exposing hypocrisy and delusion, in Austen's novels the reader is led to investigate the ways in which the characters' conceptions, wishes, or emotions make their perceptions unreliable. *Emma*, especially, seems bent on revealing the the dissolution of (almost) all anthropological certainties, all epistemological certainties.<sup>13</sup>

Austen's art is, like Butler's and, in another field, Hogarth's, "an outsider's art." It is a work that contrasts Fielding to Hogarth in terms of "popular and polite art," Ronald Paulson has shown that Hogarth's work

[in Marston's terms] stimulates revolutionary consciousness, while Fielding, as we have seen, remains on the side of the dominant society, even when he is aware of its failings-- [Hogarth found less appreciation than Fielder] because there was no French Revolution in . . . art as context for Hogarth's attack; and because Hogarth's language . . .

<sup>12</sup>From Butler's "Characters," quoted in "Introduction," Hugh de Quency, Samuel Butler's *From Characters*, ed. Hugh de Quency (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. xci.

<sup>13</sup>I use these terms in the Foucaultian sense (cf. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, tr. A-M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971)).

placed on the periphery when Elaine placed squarely in the center. Moreover, Elizabeth was never advocating socialism; he was only entertaining a fantasy (which took his art) that to lose someone of energy, both as political and as aesthetic the individual suggested in Elizabeth a nostalgia for the past. . . .<sup>12</sup> It sought a restoration of ancient liberties.

While in much of Elizabeth's work the placement of issues of opulence in the periphery suggested injection by contrast to the analogous central issues of poverty, in Austen's novels the placement of historical conflicts in marginal position suggested women's limitations by contrast to the domestic scenes shown in the center. The great events of her time, the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions, and the social upheavals they produced, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, were actively present in her narrative, yet inevitably denied a place in the foreground. But the "large" issues of national life were always there, lurking in the background, behind such conspicuous events as Sir William Lucas' superiority in Meryton and his knighthood after an address to the King, Mr Gardiner's business in Liverpool, the commercial origin of the Bingley fortune, the ---shire regiment and the whole hospital of soldiers near Brighton, Sir Thomas Bateson's colonial property in Antigua, his seat in Parliament, General Tilney's "affairs of the nation" and Miss Tilney's fear of riots for Captain Tilney's sake, the indigent gypsies that frightened Berriest

<sup>12</sup>Dennis Powney, *Jane Austen and Poetic Art in the Culture of Elizabeth and Victoria* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), University of North Carolina Press, 1976) p. 11.

Smith, William Price's commission, Captain Wentworth's ships and his fortune made at sea.<sup>16</sup> Almost invariably, Austen's attitude to social mobility seems to be positive, while mobility on grounds of any class is condemned: as we shall see, injustice and slavery are indirectly denied.

Like Hogarth, both Butler and Austen exhibit a peculiar brand of conservatism. This position can be seen as a direct consequence of their skepticism since most individuals are in some sense deluded, in case of doubt the safest course may be to follow tradition. Both Austen and Butler were opposed to violent civil results, being too skeptical of political or religious convictions to justify destroying villages and human lives. In *Ballroom*, war becomes a collective madness: "When civil fury flows ever high/ And men fall out they know not why."<sup>17</sup> Butler's laughter is based in taking the position of the common people, who stand to gain nothing from war: "Men venture necks to gain a fortune;/ The Soldier do's it every day/ (Flight to the weak/ For sinners pay" (II, 1, 113-14) When the lady declares her heart will not be won by "high Harshness Forties" (II, 1, 204), it is the queen of commerce itself is mocked; the place of the questing knight is taken by an English Quixote, the absurd *Ballroom*. Although the

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<sup>16</sup>For another, more thorough list of episodes and allusions to British naval history in Austen's fiction, see Beyond Williams, *The English Novel*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>17</sup>Butler, *Ballroom*, ed. Wilsons, p. 1. All further references to this work will be included in the text.



"ridiculous Folly and Murders of ye Presbyterians & Independent Sectians,"<sup>28</sup> that overthrew a government and killed a king constitutes the prime target of course, the poem does not oppose "good," serious warriors or righteous heroes to the folly of the ones who created the result, but attacks the very ideology of martial heroism.

Austen's work can be shown to be grounded on similar though less explicit ironies toward the mythification of war. War is often used in Austen's narratives as an underlying metaphor for social contexts. In *Pride and Prejudice*, especially, the language of war is repeatedly employed to name not a few examples, such language is used satirically to describe skirmishes between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, "attacks" by Lydia on friends and neighbors and by Mrs. Bennet on marriageable bachelors and on anyone whom she wants to bend to her opinions. The language of "the battle of the sexes" is used to refer to Elizabeth's attempts to "conquer" Mr. Darcy's heart: the very use of such conventional language is one signal to the reader that this relationship will not be good for Elizabeth. Such martial language, then, is not used "heroically," but devoted to the level of ironic cliché. The belittled terminology used to show characters conversing in private settings on private subjects serves both to uncover the hostility underlying social intercourse in an outwardly

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<sup>28</sup>Walter, *Quilting*, "Appendix B: Butler's Letter to Sir George Campbell," p.451.

temporal country village and to decide the identification of one.

It is similar, though such were distant, skepticism about the glory of war and heroism, more than anything else, that justifies Dryden's description of Butler's satire as "Parronian."<sup>10</sup> Parro, "one of those writers . . . called scandalous, studious of laughter," considered his own satires *menippes*,<sup>11</sup> for he shared Menippus' irreverent attitude to Homer's epic presentation of heroic Menippus, however, mocked the solemnity of great classics with, in Dryden's own phrase, greater "optical impediments and obscenity."<sup>12</sup>

The use of broadness and obscene language obviously separates Butler from Menippus' satire.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Butler's satire

<sup>10</sup>John Dryden, "A Discourse Concerning . . . Satire," p. 171.

<sup>11</sup>For technical discussions of "menippe" see *Enchiridion* and *Six Ways*, *Enchiridion's* Preface, and "Form of Time and Knowledge" in *The Dialogic Imagination*. For useful comments on and a comparison of Menippus through the ages, see Eugene F. Kirk, *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Bibliography of Texts and Criticism* (N. Y. and London: Garland, 1983). Kirk apparently knew his remarks on Northrop Frye's sketch of the genre in *Anatomy of Criticism*. He also invokes Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances" to outline some common traits among Menippean texts: their "unconventional distinct," their use of the structure of a comedy, ethical-topical and the theme of "right meaning or right learning" (p. vi).

<sup>12</sup>Without pretending to provide a definition of Menippe, I would tend to take this remark, when deciding whether to call a work Menippean, the author's attitude toward society and the reader more than structural or other distinguishing marks. An irreverent, sarcastic yet playful, anti-establishment attitude, assumed from the viewpoint of a social outsider, and coupled with a flaunting of artistic and social

is far from the unappetizing trend is that the former does not directly concern itself with "postwarque images of the body" or "the material bodily lower stratum," or with billingsgate speech.<sup>22</sup> Austen's irony, of course, is much more subtle and complex, just as her language is less categorical than that of typical menippees. Her satire, however, shares with the fully menippean variety a basic irreverent and anti-heroic stance that makes it the opposite of the traditional, work-hard-is-honour. As Stuart Tove observes, "Jane Austen was unique, a classical wit, equally free of innocence and indecency. . . ."<sup>23</sup> (Jane Eyre, however, will later adopt forms of humor that seem to owe much to Austen's; Lewis Carroll and the *Wile of The Importance of Being Earnest* exhibit, each in his own way, a type of anti-establishment irreverence displayed in respectable garments that allow them, to paraphrase

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conventions, seem to us to be characteristic of the menippean stance. Austen's works comply with the first but only partially with the second of these conditions. (This description of menippees is based on the Bakhtinian view of art, according to which "definite forms of social intercourse are domesticated in the setting of the works of art themselves. . . ." Within this perspective, literary genres and works are defined in relation to "the living interactions of concrete social and historical life. . . ." --M. M. Bakhtin/P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, ed. Albert J. Geras (Evanston and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 21, 22.)

<sup>22</sup>These are categories discussed by Bakhtin in *Bakhtin and His World*; see pp. 221-222.

<sup>23</sup>Stuart M. Tove, *The Amiable Humourists: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 147.

harding, to be read and enjoyed by the very people they gaily deride."<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, it is doubtful whether indignancy and an attitude of opposition to the status quo in a joyless, negative, bitterly critical satire will suffice for it to qualify as *satirique*. Stuart Dove tells us that Swift and Voltaire were often repudiated in the eighteenth century as examples "of impiety, of misanthropy, of destructive satirists."<sup>27</sup> The former, dazzlingly brilliant as he is, deserved Lin Yeu's imputation "folded between the equators of passion and the compasses of reason, Swift sat as long on the fence that the irony entered into his . . . soul."<sup>28</sup> Of the latter, Leighton comments that his "laughter is reduced to mere mockery. . . Its force almost entirely deprived of the representing and renewing element (SW, 113).

In *satirique* as in Aristotelian satire it is not humankind but the notion of humankind that is subverted. Thus, for instance, we find *satirique* in Leslie's "Epilogue of the Owl"

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<sup>26</sup>The people "derided," however, are not those vulgar souls who do not know the distasteful discourse, but those in power, and they are laughed at, not because they ignore the satire, but because they follow it. In a sense, it is the moral and ideological norms themselves that are under attack in satire. Derek Partridge and Wilde's The Derivation of Satire (London:

<sup>27</sup>Dove, The English Misanthrope, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup>Lin Yeu, "The Ironic Tradition in American Prose from Swift to Johnson," Reveries and Accusations: Essays (Papers Delivered at the Third Clark Lippard Seminar (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1964)), p. 28.

ridiculing "silly mortals" who never deal men with temples to his own question, "what is a hero?" Mowbray answers that it is "neither men nor God," and concludes that the one thing certain is that heroes are dead.<sup>47</sup>

In her juvenile *Jessie* shows her reaction to two of the most important cultural aversions of the idea of heroism in a young woman's education: history and sentimental and gothic novels. In "The History of England from the Reign of Henry the 4th to the Death of Charles the 1st," she parodies historians who based their positions on their own political sympathies, and who saw historical events as the consequences of the actions of a few larger-than-life heroes. As one critic, Erigid Hooper, suggests, the satiric tone of "The History" overcomes the common "childhood dream of inhabiting the gothic and absolutist splendor" of tales of great "cruel families and deposed monarchs."<sup>48</sup> The parody found in the juvenile, including her mockery of sentimental novels, can be fruitfully analyzed in terms similar to those used in Bakhtin's discussion of "novels" (1981, 112-3, 123-27). In

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<sup>47</sup>Lucan, *The Works of Lucan of Samosata*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), vol. 1, p. 112. A further example of the degradation of epic works in Lucian can be found in his "Prologue" to *The Histories*, where "Dionysus" tells before Alcibiades and his court is called "an extremely tall story," evidence that cynicism "though the Romans were fools enough to believe anything." *Class. History and Lucian or the Age*, tr. Paul Turner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 4.)

<sup>48</sup>Erigid Hooper, "Jane Austen and the Stuarts," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, pp. 24-25.

the same irreverent spirit, in *Northanger Abbey* Catherine actively criticizes the shortcomings of historical prose, as we shall discuss below.

In this same novel, Austen stroves to undermine with laughter the masculine pathos of persecuted virtue of protagonists of sentimental and Gothic novels and thus their established form of heroism. And she did so, not by opposing novels to classical epic, but precisely in recognition of the right of novelsists to be ranked with "any other literary composition in the world." Paradoxically, she needed to uphold the right of her "sister authors" to be taken seriously in order to attack them, not as ridiculously weak, but as worthy of being assailed. The novelist takes this position clear in that famous passage at the end of Chapter 7 protesting the "general wish of degrading the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them" (80, 57-58.)

This passage occurs, however, in a novel that is, as we shall see, intended to mock the conception of the heroine as passive victim in both sentimental and gothic novels. Catherine Morland, Austen's "anti-heroine," is described throughout the entire narrative by opposition to "Gothic, Ossianic and Ruin'd," in ways that contrast her prosaic ordinariness to the novelistic, dependable extraordinariness of these heroines. Austen insists, however, that she is not

parodying such novels because she finds them wanting in literary stature, but rather because she admires them as works "in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusion of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best Chinese language" (28, 28).

This attitude, then, is far from what Bakhtin calls "external and crude literary parody," with its flat condemnation of the parodied discourse. The subtlety and complexity of Austen's text can be compared to the "unusually balanced dialogues of parodying discourses" Bakhtin finds in Don Quixote (28, 41). Austen's parody is double, aimed at deflating both the view that contemporary novels are inferior to the classical solemnity of literary masters and the sentimental novel's conception of the pure, young, long-suffering heroine. By making a simultaneous attack on classical texts and the modern feminine heroines, Austen's Northanger Abbey, as Julia Fawcett Brown puts it, "is challenging the Western tradition of heroines itself."<sup>40</sup>

Austen's satire is English and Englishness and is thus more parody more sparingly, but takes the form of the repeated humiliation of the heroine that is also present in Northanger Abbey. This humiliation (which we will discuss in terms of a carnivalesque crowning and uncrowning) does not occur because

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<sup>40</sup>Julia Fawcett Brown, Jane Austen's Novels, p. 2.

a hero's greatness dwells the heroine, but because heroine, said as female, is subverted, Austen's satire is a playful attack on officialdom, an undermining of the status quo through laughter, similar to the one we find in newspaper satire.

#### Austen's Ironic Language

If Austen's attack on official truths is playful rather than straightforwardly negative, it is also because her ironic language is ambivalent. Let us approach an analysis of her irony by looking, first, at the characteristics of her language as the critical tradition sees, second, at the possibilities of applying the major theories of irony to an examination of Austen's.

The traditional image of Austen's language has stressed her gentility and conventional morality. One example will portray how her works have often been represented in the minds of many readers and English teachers: for a long time, American schoolboys used to be "carefully exposed to Fanny Hill and Richardson in the lower grades,"<sup>10</sup> apparently in the hope that they would learn good manners as much as a controlled and elegant writing style. In the case of one schoolboy, at least, such reading only led to a lifelong quest for her novels: in Mark Twain's famous phrase, to enter her fictional world made his feel as comforted as "a barkeeper entering the

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<sup>10</sup>See Watt, "Introduction," *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 7.



Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>121</sup> Critics have done much to promote the "heavenly" image of Austen by characterizing her style in terms of her "deliberate and detailed" rhetorical patterns.<sup>122</sup>

It is undeniable that Austen strives for correctness; however, many critics have tended to overemphasize the classical harmony of her precise wording and rhetorical equilibrium, and to overlook her inclusion of fragments in the weaving of values of her reports, in indirect or free indirect style, of the speech of individual characters or the collectivity. They have also tended to ignore how she combined academic correction and a persistent awareness of *you, small*—though in her case, as we shall see in our discussion of *Pride and Prejudice*, "the people" are often called "the neighbourhood," while in another sense the uncivilized culture she addresses is that of women. The joyful energy of her writing has been explained as a result of her delight in being scrupulously accurate. Mary Lambelle, for instance, observes Austen's "scrupulous phrasing", concluding that she must have "positively enjoyed" revising and polishing.<sup>123</sup> Typically, critics relate Austen's irony to her economy in representing quirks and anomalies in her characters' speeches, and remain

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<sup>121</sup>From a Mark Twain manuscript entitled "Jane Austen," quoted in Lee Kirk, *Jane Austen*, p. 7.

<sup>122</sup>Edward N. Rieu, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Pattern of Elizabethan Comedy*, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1940, p. 13.

<sup>123</sup>*Jane Austen and Her Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 521.

innovative in the ways in which these quips subvert the rhetorical equilibrium of her prose. There is little stress on her obvious mischievous pleasure in shattering platitudes and shaking up prejudice and common assumptions, both official and unofficial, academic and popular. While to some of us Austen's great achievement is her uniquely irreverent, easy-faced laughter, in the view of Norman Fage Austen's success as a novelist is a consequence of her "finely-controlled use of language."<sup>18</sup> E. C. Phillips finds evidence in her prose of a distaste for slang as well as for any stereotyped, jargon-like use of terms, and "a craftsmanlike interest in English words" that convinces him that "she agrees with Henry Tilney in his strictures, made in the best Johnsonian manner, on colloquial expressions."<sup>19</sup> Phillips sees an self-mockery in the passage from *Northanger Abbey* to which he alludes, a passage which can be read as both ironic and profoundly idiomatic.

As we shall see, in spite of the precision and correctness of most of her prose, there are strong elements of disruption in her language which undermine the superficial order of her writing. This study will argue that, in spite of the conclusions of most analysts, Austen's style shows the mark of her provincial stance, one of skepticism towards, rather than concurrence with, established truths. This

<sup>18</sup>Norman Fage, *The Language of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>E. C. Phillips, *Jane Austen's English* (London Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1970), p. 17.

skepticism is not quite as pessimistic, however, but, as we shall see, infused with a sense of dry relativism. Thus, her works can be read as engaging her readers in a relationship in which the predominant attitude is an ironic one, although her irony is not of the scornful, individualistic brand.

Before characterizing Cartesian ironic language in traditional terms, let us examine some of the traditional definitions of irony, to see whether they may serve to analyze Aschen's. To the Augustans, according to Ian Watt, irony was a way to differentiate the wise from the mob.<sup>16</sup> Augustans felt they constituted a "righteous minority, ever battling for truth against every kind of deviation from the norm." Thus, they felt compelled to write to "a double, divided audience": on one side stood the other Socialists and a small band of supporters, who would understand; on the other, "the Grown and the Foplings and the Virtuous," whose language and beliefs the ironist pretended to share. In this way, the ironist would "expose [his group] to shame and ridicule," even while passing his in what was a mode of satirical insult.<sup>17</sup> This concept of irony was based on Aristotle's definition of *allos* or *allosia* in the *Rhetoric* as "self-deprecative

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<sup>16</sup>However, the term "mob" itself was an undesirable neologism for Augustans. (cf. Ian Watt, "The Ironic Tradition," p. 26)

<sup>17</sup>Watt, "The Ironic Tradition," pp. 21-27.

disimulation."<sup>10</sup> In the same terms, theorists of irony have understood satirical irony as self-disparagement aimed at more definitely confounding and humiliating an adversary.

I believe the Augustan understanding of irony cannot be applied to Austen, for it was tied to a view of laughter as suspect.<sup>11</sup> "The true gentleman, like Fanny Hill, 'sits down and laughs ha ha ha ha' . . . and Swift's prose rigidly shares the code of irony which, like that prescribed for Prussian officers, allows not more than 'sie küssen militärische necken'-- a single, shilling 'kiss'!"<sup>12</sup> Gentlemen, Lord Chesterfield informed his son, never laughed at himself: the nobleman said, "since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh."<sup>13</sup> The third Lord Shaftesbury similarly observed that laughter belittled "porters, carvers, slaves," and not "the well-bred people, those of finer taste, better taste, and raised above the vulgar."<sup>14</sup> Not everyone accepted

<sup>10</sup>Cf. D. C. Macle, Irony and the Ironist (London: Methuen, 1949), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup>Such views may have been based partly on gentleman's desire to distance themselves from a human expression that they associated and Renaissance philosophers believed was derived from salacious rejoicing in the misfortune of others. "The best known formulation of the concept of laughter as a man, scornful degradation of superiority to a deformed thing was in Rabelais. . . ." (Stuart E. Tave, The Indolent Manicist, p. 44).

<sup>12</sup>Witt, "The Ironist tradition," p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Ronald Paulson, English and English Art, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in E. Spenser Allen, Topics in English Taste (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), Vol. 1, p. 88.

such views in eighteenth-century society, however. E. Spurgeon Allen tells us that as soon as Chesterfield's Letters were published in 1774 satire began to poke fun at his strictures on laughter. Allen believes that these attacks were based on Romantic influences, but notes that even Johnson found "efforts to put laughter in the index" ridiculous. The controversy on laughter began before Romanticism, for in 1684 Congreve was already mocking such efforts in the figure of Lord Froth, "a solemn conceit," who asserted that "nothing is more becoming a Man of Quality than to laugh: I say, 'tis such a vulgar expression of the Passion: every body can laugh."<sup>18</sup>

As far as we know Spurgeon agrees with such condemnations of laughter. One need only remember that Nancy's witty refusal to dance at Sir William Jones' house was couched in terms very similar to Lord Froth's: "Every savage can dance." Such a statement seems compatible to what Ronald Paulson calls "Chesterfield's distancing of the body," aimed at feeling superior to one's surroundings;<sup>19</sup> as we shall discuss, this is precisely Nancy's failing. In *Frank and Providence* we repeatedly find the heroine defending her right to laugh, affirming that she dearly loves to laugh, "laughing heartily."

<sup>18</sup>William Congreve, *The Double-Dealer*, A Solar Press Facsimile (London: Solinger Press, 1979) - Act I, Scene 1, p. 7. Lord Froth adds that he goes to sometimes only "to distinguish myself from the Commonality and mortify the Poets . . ." (p. 8).

<sup>19</sup>Paulson, *Frank and Providence*, p. 91.

proposing to wait until Mary learns to be laughed at. In Richardson's *History* Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney fall in love in conversations in which they make each other laugh. And in *Emma* the heroine not only makes others laugh, but wittily laughs at herself. She frequently jokes, in ways that can be subversive. For example, her joke suggesting that Mr Knightley has mistaken Mr Martin's meaning ("It was not Harriet's head he was certain of; it was the dimensions of some flannel waist"—II, 474) undermines the solemn reliance on her future husband's perceptions that the contemporary ideological view of marriage would demand.

Of course, laughter is not always positive in Austen. Lydia Bennet's is mindless. Though by this name taken it is used as a method of inversion by the author. Miss Fungley's laughter is often derisive, indeed malicious. Elizabeth's and Anne's laughter, however, are often expressions of joy. That Elizabeth concludes that her happiness is greater than Jane's because "she only smiles, I laugh" (II, 343). And Anne, when her anxiety over Marianne's future is relieved after the latter accepts Mr Martin's second proposal, laughs and reflects, in serious, and laughs again in this and other cases, laughing as an expression of "a great pleasure" (II, 412).

Such an attitude to laughter cannot, as we have said, be squared with the typical Augustan attitude. If we move beyond the Augustan period, we find witicism and satire coming together in Sterne, "and we get the new kind of irony,

comic irony," in which "the unrestrained expression of feeling [is] suddenly terminated by a deft reticent underlining."<sup>12</sup> In spite of Sterne's penchant for "excesses and indelicacy," however, what is comic in his works is the absence of "basest and meanest emotions" in such characters as Tristram and Toby.<sup>13</sup> Sterne's satire was part of the historic shift to conceptions of laughter as admirable yet absurd sensibility, which would lead to Carlyle's view that "the essence of humor is sensibility; warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence."<sup>14</sup> Such sensibility could not be further from La Roche's irony.

Sensibility irony takes many forms, including Kierkegaard's view, in which it is "the paradox of the 'nature' of the individual--continually being yet always becoming." Sensitivity irony, for Kierkegaard, is "a progressive emptying of language of any referential content"; as Socratic dialogues, all meaning is invalidated, until only silence is left. This is the signum "of infinite possibilities and nothingness: the paradox of the individual."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, "The subject of the basic metaphysically ironic situation of man is that he is a

<sup>12</sup> Ian Watt, "The Ironical Tradition," pp. 28-29.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Tuves, *The Amiable Scepticist*, p. 248.

<sup>14</sup> Tuves, *Amiable Scepticist*, p. 249.

<sup>15</sup> Harold Schillefer, "Irony and the Literary Text: on the Semantics of Irony and the Will on the Pines," in *Kierkegaard and Literary Irony: Explorations and Criticisms*, eds. Harold Schillefer and Edward Markley (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), pp. 122-23.

finite being striving to comprehend an infinite hence incomprehensible reality."<sup>57</sup> Such views of irony seem too subjective and abstract to serve to understand Austen's such were ideological, were socially ironic stances, in which contemporary ideas, fashions, attitudes, are often questioned but not utterly invalidated. In Austen's novelistic finite, practical realities are partially comprehensible, but such understanding is sufficient for human happiness.

In contrast to romantic theories of irony, a modern explanation has been presented by Wayne C. Booth in which irony is largely treated as finite, indeed much often "stable." Booth recognizes that many authors dwell in "local or indefinite instabilities," and that countless modern works of excellence dwell in "ultimate ironic danger." Nevertheless, he argues that modern literary critics who accept the view that the human condition is inherently absurd as self-proving are "criminally negligent."<sup>58</sup> Booth places Austen and Dickens, among many others, on the side of stable irony, which he defines as intended by the author, correct (in that a "reconstruction" is necessary to arrive at the meaning intended), susceptible of becoming "fixed" once ironic meaning is reconstructed, and finite (in that the "reconstructed

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<sup>57</sup>Marx, *Irony and the Ideal*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 235-77.



readings are in some sense local, limited."<sup>10</sup> The core of South's argument can be seen in the following statement:

In any given place of stable irony, the central meaning of the word is fixed and universal, regardless of how many peripheral and even contradictory significances different readers may add. And yet the same words can be used in other creative acts for widely different intentions, ironic and literal.<sup>11</sup>

The very first example offered in support of this view is Mr Bennett's remark to Elizabeth that "'I admire all my three countrymen highly . . . Wickham perhaps is my favorite, but I think I shall like your husband [Darcy] quite as well as Jane's.'" South comments, "Whether Mr Bennett and Jane Austen are playing with irony or they are not, there are no two ways about it, and if you and I select an ironic reading, we shall prove either both right or both wrong."<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that South never makes his "election" of meaning for the word "favourite" explicit. I believe, however, that a strong case can be made for an ambivalent "election": Mr Bennett may be saying that Wickham, a charming hypocrite, is the one countryman he disapproves of, and, simultaneously, that since Mr Bennett personally enjoys averting manifestations of human folly, he will find greater gratification in Wickham's company than in either Darcy's or Elizabeth's.

<sup>10</sup>South, *Rhetoric of Irony*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>11</sup>South, *Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup>South, *Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 14.

If we turn to the opening statement in *Bride and Prejudice*, we find its irony to be anything but "fixed." To cite only a few interpretations, the statement, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," has been seen, by one critic, to mean "its opposite--a single woman must be in want of a man with a good fortune";<sup>12</sup> by another, it has been read as saying that the "truth" in question is only such within the mental categories of the Mrs. Bennets of her world, whose "narrowly female expectations of marriage as a self-justifying end are related by and implicitly attributed to the male's proprietary view of women as possessions."<sup>13</sup> Recently one critic, Henry Armstrong has seen in the statement evidence that Austen's fiction was in easy agreement with "self-evident" married ideology.<sup>14</sup> Following Bakhtin's definition of dialogism, the elegantly phrased statement may be understood as reflecting the ironic conflict between the prototypical educated mind that could so express itself, and the commonplace view of fortune-hunting women--

The reference to universal acknowledgment of truths points the irony simultaneously in both directions, for it is

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<sup>12</sup>Dorothy Van Ghent, "On *Bride and Prejudice*," in *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Donald F. Grey, Variorum Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 344.

<sup>13</sup>Lionel W. Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," *E.L.S.*, 33 (1970), p. 127.

<sup>14</sup>Henry Armstrong, p. 115.

signs not only in the fire-breaths of this world, but also in the intellectual postures that so often relied on philosophemes as gentlemanly cosmetics. In eighteenth-century representative prose Austen may have introduced many allusions to commonly acknowledged beliefs or truths and appears in Dryden's essay an satire, dedicated in apophthegmatic, hyperbolic terms to the Earl of Robert, whose benevolence and intelligence "is a truth so generally acknowledged that it needs no proof."<sup>17</sup> Similar allusions can be found in Berkeley's treatises and dialogues.<sup>18</sup> In a recent publication, Kenneth Surin has shown that the statement imitates both the language of proponents of moral self-examination and that "associated with Rousseau, Smith, and other prestigious philosophers of the day."<sup>19</sup>

In that famous sentence Austen couples an allusion to a stylistic convention in contemporary prose and an idea suggested by the interest of mothers of marriageable daughters that any rich bachelor must get married. Thus she produces what should be an incongruent mixture, not only of styles, but of two particular stances vis-a-vis the world, two subjective positions in experiencing reality. The mixture,

<sup>17</sup>John Dryden, *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. H. F. Kerr (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), Vol. II, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. George Berkeley, "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," and "Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, in opposition to Scepticism and Materialism," in *The Works of George Berkeley* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), pp. 138, 141, 152, 164.

<sup>19</sup>Surin, "Fiction and Fraudulence": A Study in Artistic Economy," p. 18.

nevertheless, sounds authoritative. For, indeed, the fallacious argument that "everyone agrees" is no more illogical when used to substantiate the idea that a young man must get married because he is rich than it is when used in any other connection. When viewed dialogically, the irony of Austen's statement suggests that conjectures are invested with the dignity of truths when our self-interest would be served if they would prove correct. Thus, this opening statement attacks through fictional, narrative methods both the fictions posited as truths by intellectualism and those by which "respectable people" live. In doing so, she mocks both the exposure of some middle-class individual aspirations and the hidden self-serving character of many passages of authoritative prose.

And yet, as we shall see, the fictional Austen makes way to simultaneously view as inescapable, in a very even necessary, way of approaching reality. In this sense, Austen's irony is not only complex in its allusions, but subversive. This study will analyze how the "official" literary ideology regarding young women and marriage is treated in her work, asserting that its major tenets are upheld only after being reversed, so that Austen can simultaneously remain within orthodoxy and radically revise its meaning. This ideosyncratic position can be best understood in terms of essential elements of carnival present in her novels, in spite of the absence of the most obvious

traits of carnivalesque language. Bakhtin's conception of carnival and its applications to Austen's narratives may be seen as an useful theoretical tool to understand her subversion.

### Carnival in Austen

At first glance, it is difficult to perceive a carnivalesque conception of the world, a carnivalesque aesthetic and style in Austen's novels. In her writing we find none of the typical features or iconological references of popular-festive traditions which, according to Bakhtin, influenced Rabelais, and which many critics regard as *non grata* condition for a literary work to qualify as carnivalesque. Let us explore in what sense her writings exhibit that "transposition of carnival into the language of literature" that Bakhtin described in *Discourse*. First, I will briefly summarize what Bakhtin meant by "carnival" and "carnivalization of literature." Second, the ways in which this concept can be fruitfully applied to a reading of Austen's works will be outlined, beginning with an account of the conditions in her education and personal situation that favored her use of carnivalesque elements. Third, the differences between Austen's portrayal of the body and that of most carnivalesque literature will be discussed, together with other historical situations impacting on her fiction. Fourth, a sketch of the ways in which Austen's narratives cannot be

accounted for by appealing to Bakhtin will lead to a momentary criticism of his theories and to a brief discussion of other theoretical tools to be used in this study.

### Bakhtin's Theory of Carnival

By "carnival," Bakhtin alludes not only to seasonal festivities and other mass ritual spectacles of the Middle Ages, imbued with an "obvious sensuous character" and a "strong element of play" (RHM, 7). In defining the term, he also refers to the folk traditions derived from and often associated with them, and, most importantly, to the philosophic outlook embodied in these traditions. Carnival grew by opposition to "official festivals,"<sup>12</sup> in which participants solemnly celebrated "the triumph of a truth already established, the predominant truth that was put forward as eternal and indisputable;" in such "morality-laden serious" rituals, "laughter was alien" (RHM, 8-9). "Popular-festive traditions" were characterized by a temporary suspension of class and political/social structures as

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<sup>12</sup>It is probably a mistake to conceive carnival as opposed to the actual political or administrative structures as they operate at a given time; rather, popular festivals appeared, in Bakhtin's view, "officially verboten." The distinction is important because it was the myth created and celebrated in such rituals, that of moralistic truth, that carnival undermined. Economics, political and ideological reality was never as simple or as desirable as official rites portrayed it.

everyone in the town "for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (188,1).<sup>12</sup>

The solemnity of official death, its upholding of a rigid order, was suspended during carnival, when everything was turned upside down, everything was mocked. These popular festivities were also associated to other manifestations of folk culture, such as verbal parodies and the abusive, joking, exuberant language of the marketplace. This language, in which curses, oaths, profanity abounded, was part of a subculture that proliferated in the streets, beer-room and took hold of the town during folk festivals.

In carnival pageantry and rituals, as in the verbal forms related to them, there was a strong emphasis on food, drink, digestion, and sexual life. There was, likewise, an insistent representation of death, degradation and uncrowning. Figures of authority were mocked, while a fool (or a clownish figure playing the role of a fool) was crowned and allowed to reign. The typical images of carnival were both sexual and belittling, grotesque and hyperbolic, tending to eliminate all

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<sup>12</sup> Victor Turner and other anthropologists have described folk festivals and the rites of passage of many cultures in terms that bear striking similarities to Bakhtin's description of this "utopian realm." See VICTOR TURNER, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), especially the chapters on liminality and communitas. For a relatively brief presentation of Turner's ideas in the context of comparative mythology, see VICTOR TURNER, "Liminal to Liminoid in play, field and ritual: An essay in comparative mythology," *The Anthropological Study of Human Play*, Rice University Studies, 88, (Houston: Portland, Tex., 82, No. 3 (Houston: Rice University Press, 1974), pp. 51-91.

barriers, so that the human body merged symbolically with the earth.

The "spiritual and ideological dimension" was very much present in the apparent confusion, for everything was defined as it could be seen, and the most important representation was that of truth. Paradoxically, by suspending the validity of all official, eternal, indisputable truth, which proclaimed that God had ordained the people's exclusion from power, a carnivalesque spirit made it possible for the people to believe. As "the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, of decay, of renewal" (MSA, 16), carnival substituted the people's faith in their difference from the powerful, their own capacity to grow and the world's ability to be transformed.<sup>12</sup> The unofficial folk culture of marketplace and fairs turned the official ideology upside down so the people could believe in it without doing violence to themselves.

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<sup>12</sup>As Keith Thomas explains, although popular laughter in Tudor England was a conservative force and often "a crude form of moral censorship," "there was also a current of radical, critical laughter which, instead of reinforcing accepted norms, sought to give the world a shove in a new direction" ("The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England," *Eng. Stud.* 11, 1967, pp. 77, 78). This idea is substantiated by Bakhtin (in Roy Lincoln, who states that carnival acts as an instrument of "satiric, lyric, epic knowledge for groups in their complexity, therefore, [as] an instrument of action, with essential modifying focus in the direction of social change and possible progress, with respect to society as a whole. . . ." Lincoln nevertheless recognizes that carnival may be used for repressive or reactionary ends. *The Carnivalesque* (Eng. Studies, 1979, quoted in *European Literary Scholarship: Intellectual History, Poets, Critics, Language* [Oxford: Cornell University Press, 1980], p. 180, n. 12).



Finally, while the people in their interaction in the marketplace and in fairs and festivals produced their own language and art forms, these in turn influenced the work of academically trained philosophers and artists who, like Bakhtin, revealed in the democratic vision of popular festivity as "a language for all the world" (1991, 189).<sup>10</sup> According to Bakhtin, carnival traditions gave rise to an artistic conception that flowered in the Renaissance and that was radically opposed to classical order. In modern times, some writers who felt the deadening weight of official ideologies, and who received the influence of carnival indirectly, through literary sources (through the works of such writers as Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes), interpreted in their work categories that together make up what Bakhtin called the "carnivalisation of literature." Briefly, these categories include, first, "free and familiar contact among people," with a suspension of hierarchical barriers; second, eccentricity, where there is a suspension of authority from "behavior, gesture and discourse"; third, simultaneity, a combining of opposites, "the sacred with the

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<sup>10</sup>And yet, in spite of Bakhtin's delight in the subversion, freedom and generalised camaraderie of folk festivals, Wayne C. Booth has pointed out the novelist's "fatal exclusiveness to the lot of the lower classes." This is one of the "ideological limitations" Booth finds in the portrayal of the chaotic Abbey of Theleme, with its gleeful servants and "functionalists" laughing for the comfort of the monks and nuns (see Booth's "Freedom of Interpretation: Bakhtin and the Challenge of Feminist Criticism," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (September 1981), p. 42).

profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid"; and fourth, profanation, "a whole system of carnivalistic debasings and bringing down to earth," often coupled with the use of blasphemous and obscenity" (RSP, 121). Typical of carnivalization is a tendency to parody sacred, lofty texts, and a peculiar type of laughter:

Carnivalistic laughter . . . is directed toward something higher--toward a shift of authorities and truths, a shift of world orders. Laughter embraces both poles of change, it deals with the very process of change, with chaos itself. Combined in the act of carnival laughter are death and rebirth, negation (isn't) and affirmation (prejudging laughter). . . (RSP, 127)

This laughter is ambivalent, both destroying certainties and affirming belief, ridiculing the gods and "the highest earthly authority . . . to force them to *generalize*" (stress in the original--RSP, 124-5). Thus it is mocking, deriding, and yet triumphantly regenerative: "It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (RSP, 12). It is a laughter which is "universal in scope . . . directed at all and everyone," and therefore often self-directed, for no one is excluded, no one is spared.

Let us now consider in what sense this view of carnival and carnivalization as subversatory, joyful ambivalence can help us to analyze Austen's work.

#### Austen's Proliferated Carnival

If the lower classes during the Middle Ages were made to participate in rites celebrating an official truth that

sanctioned their social subordination as divinely ordained, women of Austin's times were asked to acquiesce in a culture that excluded them, that had excluded them for time immemorial.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, many aspects of the folk culture of survival itself in a sense were also inimical to them, proposing a celebration of corporeality that exhibited the female body. As Harold Fiske tells us, the conventional image of a headless woman on a tavern signboard under the name "Good Woman" presented the "embodied image of woman . . . at this popular level of consciousness; the 'good woman' is all body, without head, tongue, mind or spirit."<sup>16</sup> The word "body" here is synonymous of "headless trunk."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>The most famous summary of classical and patriotic views of women remains the one passed by Simona de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, tr. H. M. Parshley (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 113-14. For another excellent overview of misogyny in classical Greece and Rome, see Katharine N. Squire's *The Troubledome: Women's & Society of Antiquity in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 15-64. For an anthology of attitudes on women from classical to modern times, see *Sex in Social Images: Women in History from the Greek to the Victorians*, eds. J. O'Flaherty and L. Martini (New York: Harper & Row, 1983).

<sup>16</sup>Fiske, *Popular and Political Art*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Another image of the female body found in popular culture, that of the old hag, must be seen very differently by women than it is by men. As Mary Russo observes, the grotesque body of senile, pregnant legs in the March terracotta figurines which appear to Bakhtin as ambivalent images of pregnant death, and therefore as a model of corporeal language, appear to the feminist reader "loaded with all the connotations of fear and loathing associated with the biological processes of reproduction and aging. Bachelard, like many other social theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, fails to acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender in his essential model of the body politic. . . ." (Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory,"

Nevertheless, in spite of the discovery of such conceptions of women in the popular subculture, (and in spite of other historical problems that will be outlined later), a sounder contestatory attitude like that of folk carnival could be fruitfully applied to the feminine predicament. Ambivalent laughter could be directed against the official "truth" regarding women. Carnival was the feast of social outsiders, the cultural means by which the common people could subvert official ideology without immediately and obviously threatening the established order, without surrendering to their oppressors but also without suffering reprisals. There are all needs that were shared: in this sense, the image of the glump, headless woman could be used to decide the ideology underlying women's social function and at the same time to force it to be radically renewed. After all, as Natalia Leon Davis has shown, there was subversive potential in popular and literary images of sexual invasion, including the image of sexually active, disorderly women.<sup>127</sup> As we shall see, Austin made use of the image of the "fanny," the "disorderly"

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many other social theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, fails to acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender in his aesthetic model of the body politic. . . ." (Mary Russo, "Female Disobedience, Carnival and Theory," in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 213).

<sup>127</sup> Natalia Leon Davis, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Invasion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe," in *The Riverbank Murd. Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Richard A. Babcock (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 128.

voiced, by dressing her in respectable clothes, as she did with Catherine Morland, whose sexual drive is strong and assertive yet innocently expressed, or by selectively casting a slightly young woman with only some of the garments of disorder, as she did with Lizzie Bennet, who lusted after "efficiency," but who, after living with Wickham out of wedlock, would remain unapologetic. Austen's disruptive, lusty young women are viewed sympathetically, like Catherine, or at least allowed to get away with their actions, like Lydia, when they are spontaneous; however, her heroines will draw upon self-assertive young women who take the sexual initiative when they are also greedy and calculating, like Isabella Thorpe or Fanny Crawford.

As shall be argued when discussing Austen's novels, carnivalesque images of disruptive women (as initiators of sexual relations or as outspoken and disobedient moral agents, unbridled by men)<sup>10</sup> were accessible to feminist men. It was not easy, however, to use carnivalesque images for feminist ends while these images remained strongly tied to misogynist ideas. For this reason, Sheila Davis tells us, "one strand in early feminist thought argued that women were not by nature more purely, disobedient and risible than men." Christine de Pless, for example, would argue that "if anything, it was the

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<sup>10</sup>As will be discussed below, Austen's heroines refuse to live in darkness or mystery: their processes of psychological and moral growth subject them to a humiliating "enlightening" which defines their status as novelistic heroines but which does not lead them to subordination to any man.

other way around?<sup>19</sup> That is, most women were more modest and calmer than most men.<sup>20</sup> This study will argue that Austen saw virtue and vice, as well as abilities, most equally distributed between the two sexes, but would also adopt the carnivalized figure of the disobedient female for feminist ends.

For a woman to feel an affinity toward the irreverent attitude of carnivalized literature, I believe it would help if her class position reinforced her sense of being an outsider due to gender. It was even imperative for her to be not only well-educated, but endowed with enough intellectual self-confidence to be very daring. Her intelligence, furthermore, must exhibit a strong comedic bent. It appears that in Jane Austen all these conditions met.

Austen can be considered as a social outsider from the viewpoint of class because of the conjunction of several circumstances: her status was that of a gentlewoman, but her father, the Rev. George Austen, the descendant of an old English family of woolen cloth manufacturers, had been orphaned at six and was propertyless. Her mother, Cassandra Leigh, "had associated time with Oxford" and aristocratic relations, but was apparently puritanical. (In *Steventon Rectory*, where George took her, Cassandra apparently took to rural life without a murmur, however, tending her cows and pigs with admirable good humor.) While Jane was growing up,

<sup>19</sup> *Madeline Bandy Davis*, p. 149.

the family lived under "the shadow of hard poverty,"<sup>60</sup> and "she spent her most productive years as what Barbara Fyn would call 'a disgraced gentlewoman,'"<sup>61</sup> Having been made to feel that she was of estimable origin yet poor, and having suffered the abuse and condemnation of her fashionable relatives and their friends,<sup>62</sup> Austen could have either taken the attitude of insisting on rank as her due, or accepted the position of partial outsider. The former is the position of Sir Walter Elliot, ridiculed in *Persuasion*. The latter is the stance many of her heroines are forced to assume.<sup>63</sup>

Jane Austen, furthermore, was unusually well educated, and her mind was highly compatible with the irreverence of canonical literature. Her family provided a propitious

<sup>60</sup>Park House, *Jane Austen: Her Life*, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup>Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen*, p. xviii.

<sup>62</sup>According to her own niece, Fanny Knight Eastonhill, Jane and Cassandra Austen were not belittled, for they had been "brought up in the most complete ignorance of the world and its ways (I mean as to fashion etc.)." Only the kindness of Mrs Knight and their aunt's relations saved the Austen sisters from being "very much below par as to good society and its ways." The Austens "were not rich and the people with whom they chiefly mixed were not of all high bred. On is almost anything more than mediocre and they at home, tho' superior in mental powers and cultivation were on the same level as far as cultivation goes." Austen's biographer, Park House, apparently eager to defend Austen's social standing, protests that Fanny Knight wrote "with sarcasm," but admits "True bitterness may reveal truth in a human situation." (Park House, *Jane Austen: Her Life*, pp. 118-9.)

<sup>63</sup>As Claudia Johnson observes, "Sir Walter Elliot—who ought to have contested that Austen's characters belong chiefly to the widdling sickness of society," and indeed do steel-sided Austen's work with devastating conviction, "belatedly" (*Jane Austen*, p. xviii).

intellectual environment, since everyone loved to read, and apparently it was not thought necessary to limit severely the range of female knowledge. Her father, himself academically successful at Oxford, cared "for the education of his daughters." Her mother, herself the daughter of a scholarly factor, was enterprising enough to write spirited comic verses about everyday family affairs.<sup>12</sup> At fifteen, when Jane Austen entered her family by proving Love and Friendship, she already possessed astonishing intellectual self-assurance. In the face of a culture that from every corner proclaimed female inferiority, Jane Austen, a child, chose to laugh. Her juvenile shows, as Virginia Woolf puts it, that "at fifteen she had few illusions about other people and none about herself"; and yet her writing was "spirited, easy, full of fun, verging with freedom upon sheer nonsense." Somehow she must have found in her repertoire a conventional stance that she could use, and somehow she knew that she was doing something radically new. Her Austen wrote not merely "for home consumption," but

for everybody, for nobody, for our age, for her own. In other words, even at that early age Jane Austen was writing. . . --but what is this note which surges in with the rest, which sounds distinctly and penetratingly all through the volume? It is the sound of laughter. The girl of fifteen is laughing in her corner at the world.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Paul Fynes, *Jane Austen*, pp. 14 and 17-8.

<sup>13</sup>Virginia Woolf, "Jane Austen," in *Our Writ*, ed. John Galsworthy, a collection of critical essays, p. 17.



In the earliest fragments of her juvenilia, written when Austen was twelve, we find the strongest, most direct and unalloyed influence of carnival at all her works, with the possible exception of *Emma*, her posthumous fragment. These early dramatic sketches and bated narratives can be assigned as clear illustrations of the four "carnivalistic categories" that make up carnivalization. If we except the use of obscenity, which is not found in the juvenilia (or, of course, anywhere in Austen), carnivalistic manifestations are so common in these childhood compositions that the latter appear almost as a catalogue of ways to use carnivalistic categories. Let us examine an account of a first visit by one family to neighbors in the neighborhood, from the very first piece, "Frederic and Elfrida," as an example:

[Elfrida and her companions] were struck with the engaging exterior and beautiful outside of Jane's, the eldest of the young ladies; but as'er they had been very minutes seated, the wit & Charles which shone resplendent in the conversation of the amiable Frederic, remained them as much that they all with one accord jumped up and exclaimed,

"Lovely & too charming fair one, notwithstanding your forbidding quiet, your gravey tresses & your swelling hips, which are more frightfull than imagination can paint or pen describe, I cannot refrain from expressing my rapture at the engaging qualities of your mind, which as early wins for the Morris, with which your first appearance must ever inspire the every visitor." "Your sentiments so nobly expressed on the different excellencies of Indian and English Melins, & the judicious preference you give to the former, have excited in me an admiration of which I can alone give an adequate idea, by assuring you it is nearly equal to what I feel the myself."

Then making a profound courtesy to the amiable and cheerful Sabacca, they left the room and hurried home. (*Before the First*, 189, p. 2)

One of the observations that first strike the reader is the visitors' open avowal of their impressions of the young ladies: the remarks both praising and abusing Sabacca are spoken with the freedom and familiarity the characters in the *Jessie* do so often exhibit. Two paragraphs below the open here quoted another instance of "free and familiar contact" can be found, when we are told that the intimacy between the families "gave to such a pitch that they did not scruple to kick one another out of the window as the slightest provocation." The barrier thus overcome, however, is not that of a social hierarchy, as in popular carnival, but that of manners as social conventions showing a respect for others. In typical carnivalesque reversal, violence becomes a mark of intimacy and community.

Secondly, the whole passage, as indeed the whole composition, is fraught with obvious eccentricity: the socially unacceptable remarks addressed to Sabacca, for example, are underlined by the visitors' bizarre behavior in "jumping up" and speaking in unison. Thirdly, in the contrast between the "beautiful" Jessies and the "frightful" Sabacca, we see one of the easy manipulations in which the childish writer delights. In the visitors' reactions to Sabacca herself, moreover, there is a combination of opposites, as horror at her physical appearance gives way to "raptures" provoked by

her "bird." The incongruence between the "noble sentiments" and their object, the qualities of domestic and foreign climates, is another instance of dissimulation. Fourthly, the emphasis on "noble sentiments" and reference to what "pen cannot describe" and "admiration of which I can alone give an adequate idea" constitute evidence of the periodic intention of the piece, which professes the timeless validity of such sentimental fiction. This technique tone is, in the words of one critic, "the prevailing mode of the *Journalia*," where we can see Jane Austen taking off on practically every feature of the sentimental novel as popular at the time, from its claim of timelessness to its narrative techniques.<sup>42</sup> In the passage quoted above, the concluding sentence of the speech addressed to Rebecca derives not only the speakers' mistaken sense of sensibility but also the typical self-understanding of romantic artists and heroines. However, laughter here is not merely based on ridicule. Since there is no sensible standpoint from which all absurdity can be judged, the whole is engulfed in a childish, joyful revelling in nonsense.

Of course, in Austen's adult works such traits appear only after having been substantially modified. In one of the later pieces in the *Journalia*, "Catharine, or the Bower," we already find the author combining elements of survival and features of realistic narratives in the sentimental tradition.

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<sup>42</sup>Howard S. Cobb, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 15.

In this place it becomes evident she was making an effort to incorporate "the rules of artistic composition," as she occasionally refers, in *Northanger Abbey*, to rhetorical demands for classical unity in style. Such efforts would never lead her to classicism, of course, but she did strive to work both in opposition to and within the mainstream of contemporary narrative. In the process of superimposing the overall structure of the contemporary novel and the attitude of carnival laughter, her use of the carnivalesque categories would be modified.

In Austen's mature fiction the first of these categories, "free and familiar contact," appears in the tearing down of the barrier dominant culture has erected between the sexes, through the creation of, in the words of one critic, "a bright atmosphere in which men and women speak to each other as equals."<sup>40</sup> The second category, eccentricity, became a feature of Austen's comic villains, like General Tilney and Lady Catherine, and of her many fools, clowns and rogues. These three character types can be seen as ironic masks, by means of which she often attacks the official ideology regarding such issues as women's property rights, parental law, marital instincts, the education of children, religious sentiment. The fool, because of his/her stupid inacceptance of lying conventions, the rogue, whose lies are justified

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<sup>40</sup>Mary De Marché, "Review" (of Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the Art of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)), *E. S. L.*, 1 (July 1988), p. 248.

because she or he lies to liars or hypocrites, and she alone, as a rogue who disguises as a fool in order to unveil foolish lies while seeming not to understand them, are three ancient literary devices serving to undermine conventional notions of sentimentality (CP, 480-10). Austen combines these tools, combining their functions with a realistic depiction of characters.

We will later analyze Austen's fools (Catherine Morland, Mrs. Bennet, Collins, Miss Bates, Mr. Woodhouse) and her rogues (Henry Tilney, Emma, Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Knight), and refer to her rogues (Captain Tilney, Wickham, Frank Churchill). For the time being, I will briefly point out two devices by which Austen makes use of fools in her novels. In one, her foolish characters reveal certain truths to the reader in spite of themselves; in the other, truth is told in spite of the novel's own "official ideology." In the first device, Austen's satire reveals to us the evils of certain social situations, typically those that affect women. In the second device, however, we find a more carnivalesque use of fools, for it is these ridiculous characters, previously held up to our ridicule, who express, from a feminist position, views that no one else dares.

Sometimes these views are directly stated by the character in question, as is the case of Mrs. Bennet on the subject of the injustice of entailing property away from the female line. It is curious that Jane and Elizabeth Bennet,

the two intelligent daughters, take the proper, officially sanctioned position in trying to make their mother understand that neither Mr. Collins nor Mr. Bennet is personally to blame for the entail, while only Mrs. Bennet expresses, mixed with a most unreasonable resentment toward the individuals involved, the very sensible view that there is no reason for such entails. (Lady Catherine can most insensitively boast that "It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family"--PP, 144.) A similar case is that of Catherine Morland naïvely feeling sorry for the writers of "Real, Natural History," and citing very convincing criticisms of contemporary historical methods, while the eminently sensible Elizabeth Tilney defends the more conventional academic position.

On other occasions, a character the novel itself has taught us to despise will not seemingly so alter ego for the author herself. Such is the case, for example, in Lydia's interruption while the loathsome Collins reads *Fordyce's Sermons to Young Ladies*. Collins has just committed a sin of the kind most likely to reekle his creature, the author herself: he has contemptuously declined the offer of a novel as reading material. When he resumes, instead, *Fordyce's Sermons*, he is compensating his offense by submitting his "fair hearers," his female cousins, to the unpleasant and veiled discovery of what Wallstonecroft called "most sentimental stuff."<sup>18</sup> He goes but Mrs. Bennet, intent on marrying Collins to

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<sup>18</sup>Wallstonecroft, p. 144.

one of her daughters, could submit to an evening of such reading without censure. And, if neither Elizabeth nor Jane, our two sensible and dutiful young ladies, would condemn Lydia's rudeness, they would undoubtedly rejoice in its effects, when Mr. Collins refuses to go on reading and challenges Mr. Bennet to a game of backgammon. Thus Lydia, acting as irresponsible "vase" of unruly wants, becomes the means by which Austen could subvert allegorical morality and demure with impunity.<sup>10</sup> Since it is giddy Lydia who indulges in such unseemly behavior, Austen can enjoy the satisfaction of putting a allegorical seed in his place without being liable to reproaches.

With regard to the third category of carnivalization, Austen's mature fiction abounds in all kinds of subversions: far novels, for instance, often place characters with comically contrasting traits in interaction with each other or combine opposite traits in the same character. One

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<sup>10</sup>Lydia's unbridled disregard for social and moral codes, leading to her elopement and marriage to Wickham, seems to be linked to the figure of the "warily" or "disorderly" woman of both literary tradition and popular culture which Natalie James Davis has described. According to Davis, this image of "the warily woman smacking the truth," subverting sexual license and ridiculing the men who should be restraining her, not only provided "a chance for temporary release from traditional and stable hierarchy," but also acted as "part and parcel of earlier over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within the economy." Play with the image of the warily "woman on top," as Davis calls this reversal of orthodox femininity, "not only reconfirmed certain traditional ways of thinking about society, it also facilitated innovation in historical theory and political behavior" (Natalie James Davis, pp. 184-5).

typically Austenian type of mediocrity has one character attempting to solve a romantic problem, or a deficiency in a relationship, by some reference to food. The effect is an underscoring of the seriousness of important moments or a bringing romantic love down to earth. Three brief examples: Mrs Norland surmises that Catherine's lovelessness is a pining for the culinary deliciousness of Northanger Abbey; Mrs Fennet resolves to seek a reconciliation with her future son-in-law, Henry, by asking Elizabeth "what he likes to eat," that she may order her cook to prepare it; Mr Woodhouse suggests to Anne that the best way to do Mr Elliot a service is not to find him a wife but to invite him to dinner. All three examples seem to confuse love and digestion, so that mediocrity aligns with profanation of sentimental love. Or, alternatively, a show of attention can be juxtaposed to references to cooking, as it happens when both Mr Knightley and Anne are tenderly contemplating the latter's generosity in sending a whole hind of pork to the Bateses; Mr Woodhouse's reaction, describing how pork must be boiled so it won't be unwholesome, and his reference to the effects of roast pork on the stomach vividly defines the scene (II, 112).

Profanation, the last category of carnalization, includes such offenses as Catherine's love of dirt in childhood, her naive assertion, when hoping for a walk with the Tilneys on a rainy day, that she "never made dirt," and Elizabeth Bennet's dirty petticoats, a result of her walk



across muddy fields to visit the ailing Jane. Furthermore, denigrations of the heroine's romantic stature occur everywhere in *Austen*, for everyone must occasionally submit to the folly of the John Thorpes, Collinses, Mrs Bennets, Miss Bates, Mr Woodhouses of this world. *Austen's* narratrices, however, are as far from depicting "snares" the narrator can look down upon as they are from creating "villains" to be opposed to the purity and sense of the heroine. Rather, *Austen's* satirizing appears to be generalized; thus the antitheses by which *Austen's* protagonists are consistently humiliated and "snares" as the Lords of Misery or Kings of Fools were during carnival.

This humiliation is not of a solemn cast, however, for her protagonists and her narrators laugh at themselves as much as at the world around them. As we laugh with them, that world is renewed, transformed into a place where women can live and grow. Laughing in *Austen's* works is very similar to "the people's festive laughter" of Bakhtin's account because it is, like the people's,

aim directed at those who laugh. [The people do not exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world. . . . This is one of the essential differences of the people's festive laughter from the pure satire of modern times: the satirical whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it. The wholeness of the world's comic aspect is destroyed, and that which appears comic becomes a private reaction. The people's ambivalent laughter, on the other hand, expresses the point of view of the whole world: he who is laughing also belongs to it. (1984, 12)]

The present study will examine Austen's characters' generalized, often self-directed laughter. In all these ways Austen's fiction, as we shall see, undermines the established, official ideology regarding women and love by means of feminist camouflage irony.

### The "Protean Body" and Other Limitations

Nevertheless, there is at least one area in which her work is almost as far from popular carnival as her traditional image with the critics would have it: her approach to the issue of human corporeality. In Austen's fictions there are none but the sketchiest physical descriptions, and certainly no earthy blending of the body with the world around it through bodily functions. She did not make use of the popular tradition of "rascous bawdry" that influenced Nabokov. As a woman she could not find this tradition acceptable, for, as Wayne C. Booth has shown, it was grounded on a sexist exclusion of women's voices, both literal and symbolic: "It is not only that [in Nabokov's novel] there are no significant female characters; it is that even the passages most favorable to women are spoken by and addressed to men who are the sole arbiters of the question [of the questelle des femmes]." Nabokov's exclusion of women because slangy is episodes like that in which the Lady of Burce is followed and pined on by her own dogs, is punishment for rejecting Burce's advances. As Booth observes, neither the novelist nor the theorist

counterbalances the artificialism of the character's language by criticizing his sexist attitudes.<sup>12</sup>

It is not only *Shobōjin's* *gagaku* that excludes women, however. The popular tradition itself uses gender-biased images (such as the headless "good woman" referred to above). For example, images of eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, sneezing, spitting, etc., not only point to a coupling of the body with the world but also represent an attitude of mastering the world, appropriating it (cf. *Shō*, 288-9) that seems triumphantly male. This triumph, though *Shobōjin* only refers it to banquet lechery, seems related to a public display of bodily functions (loud eating noises, burping, spitting coarsely, urinating, etc.) in which typically only men were permitted. We will probably never know to what extent lower-class, medieval and Renaissance women used similar imagery in their speech (or even participated themselves in such displays of bodily functions), but one can surmise that their use of such images must have been significantly different from the men's. While priests raged from the pulpit about women's bodies as the gates of hell, on the occasion of sin for men, it doesn't seem possible that the attitudes of people of both sexes to their own bodies could have been the same. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine how a defiant public show of the male body could be made without both challenging its repression by officialdom

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<sup>12</sup>Scott, "Freedom of Interpretation," pp. 43, 44, 55.

and triumphing over women.<sup>121</sup> And of course, women can hardly hear or read tales' one of such imagery without feeling, at least, excluded from the audience. The grotesque images of "eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination" cannot be fully dissociated from their misogynous meaning.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, as said above, there was in both popular and literary traditions another source of carnivalesque images, that of the sexual reversible *travestis* Susan Davis has called "woman on top," in which, for example, women are portrayed "going beyond what was ordinarily be expected of a mere female," calling themselves "and thus deserving to be like men."<sup>123</sup> These images became "a resource for domestic and public life" that could be used for both reinforcement and subversion of the status quo. The "disorderly woman" was "a multifaceted image and could operate to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and

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<sup>121</sup>For an interesting discussion of attitudes to the grotesque body from the viewpoint of male and female theorists, see Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in *English Studies/Critical Studies*.

<sup>122</sup>Of course I am not saying that any depiction of grotesquely hyperbolic or "excessive" bodily functions in literature is necessarily sexist, any more than the portrayal of sexual character constitutes sexism. I will invoke Booth's text as my only work beyond if the perceptions, biased or bigoted attitudes, action or attitude of a character is not tempered with other reflections or occurrences that criticize or problematize such acts or attitudes (cf. "Freedom of Interpretation").

<sup>123</sup>Davis, "Woman on Top," p. 155.

women in a society that allowed the lower orders few means of protest.<sup>17</sup> This imagery, originating in old myths and festive customs, was so widely disseminated through songs, in the theater and in "stories, poems, parables and broadsheets,"<sup>18</sup> and therefore accessible to Austen as she constructed certain aspects of her feminine characters.

Austen was breaking ground when she incorporated carnival into her fiction (although she had no followers, for she was looking backward, to a tradition the Victorians would largely ignore). In Austen's novels, however, overcoming "the confines between bodies and between the body and the world" (H&K, 317), was achieved through means often different from those of traditional carnival. Although her interest in the external world is very evident, it is usually linked to cultural reality, to the economic, political and ideological framework of the society of her time. In her works physiology is strong,<sup>19</sup> but the walks on the countryside, the dances, the offering and taking of hands among characters, are all part of interstices in which they often both seek pleasure and aspire to create ties of community and love. Thus the body is placed at the center of a network of social intercourse and inter-subjectivity, indeed not separated from the world, but

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<sup>17</sup>Cervic, "Women on Top," pp. 184, 185.

<sup>18</sup>Fanny Price, it is true, is frail, but fresh air and exercise (harshness-riding) are all the more important to her, and even Fanny delights in her ball. Anne Elliot is barred from dancing, but she suffers from it. And walks in *Wuthering* seem to take up a large part of the narrative.

relating to it in a sense different from that found in popular-fiction conceptions of "the grotesque body."

Authors also had to deal with other historical limitations. One constraint for all writers was the reticence in the handling of sexual matters that came to be expected of all authors, male or female. By the first decade of the nineteenth century literary allusions to the body and sexuality were becoming increasingly less frequent. This cultural change in attitudes to corporeality is well reflected readers' attitudes towards the masculinized "grotesque body." Bakhtin points out that, as European culture was affected by a gradual rise in individualism, academically educated writers lost the ability to understand the meaning of sexual and sociological obscenity in the tradition of folk culture or in Rabelais' work: "Obscenity [and] became entirely sexual, isolated, individual, and [and] as such as piece in the new official system of philosophy and imagery" (1984, 188).

Not only hardness, but also any reference to sexuality, were increasingly frowned upon. (It do not seem to enter here into the controversy over what Foucault has called "the repressive hypothesis."<sup>14</sup> I merely state the obvious: towards the beginning of the nineteenth century we find fewer references to pregnancies or to the genitalia, in any style or form, than there appeared in previous literary works.

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<sup>14</sup>M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, tr. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1976, pp. 17-49.

Finally, during the Victorian era, the point was reached when a character like Catherine Barnard Lytton in *Wuthering Heights* could suddenly deliver a baby in the midst of a passionate episode of unstable passion and stormy jealousy, without the readers having been given a single previous clue about her pregnancy.<sup>10</sup> The baby had become unspeakable.

Furthermore, women writers of Austen's time needed to exhibit even more restraint than the men in reference to the body, especially to what Bakhtin quaintly calls "the material bodily lower stratum."<sup>11</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that there is probably more frankness in Austen's fictions regarding pregnancies<sup>12</sup> and even the possibility of a Lydia Bennet "coming upon the law" than most fictional works will allow during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, her frankness was never such as to risk offending her contemporaries. We must again remember that she lived during times when antifeminist repression was most explicitly linked to fears of what was supposed to be the sexual debauchery and general lack of restraint of Jacobins and revolutionaries. Any woman author's free reference to sexuality would invite charges of liberalism, especially in the wake of the publication of Goethe's *Novels of the Author of Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, a work which revealed

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<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, Mrs Jennings's reference to her daughter Charlotte's "situation" and future confinement, while, to Lady Middleton's embarrassment, she points to her daughter (and, presumably, her large belly) in *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 127.

Meltonianscraft's living with Inlay, her conceptions out of wedlock and her suicide attempts.<sup>120</sup>

Two types of limitations, then, made it necessary for Austen to change the view of the body's relation to the world from carnival's grotesque celebration of corporeity to her own vision of the body as a point of interaction for all social relationships. The first type was based on the basic bias of the concept of the grotesque body itself. The second was the increasing prudery affecting literature, a movement that began long before Austen and which would culminate in a shunning of even indirect allusions to sexuality in Victorian times.

#### English, Jewish and Freemason

In other respects, however, carnival was particularly amenable to Austen's presentation of her moral and philosophical position. In any, carnivalesque subversion, her novels reaffirm the social values of matrimony and filial respect, but only after certain unprecedented conditions have been established: only after the protagonists have returned and asserted their freedom of choice and perception, and the people around them have been brought to recognize this freedom.

Austen's novels rest on an ideological structure in which a value of community prevails and whose outcome for others is a dominant value. Austen's characters are placed in situations

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<sup>120</sup>See Margaret Elston, pp. 43-44.



on which, as Elizabeth Langford observes, "harshness between social demands and [individual] needs [is] mutually enriching."<sup>12</sup> Of course, Austen's heroines are women who do not rebel against social demands, who are not social reformers. In my view, a crucial aspect of Austen's objective as a writer was to give voice to women who were living ordinary lives. And when these women encounter the spread social conventions that proclaim women's inferiority they do not tilt at these windmills. Often, they do something more revolutionary: they laugh.

The resolution of the conflicts acting in the narrative justify their levity, for a happy ending is inevitably reached. In the Austenian plot, Christian utopias of personal growth in a propitious milieu are reached in the end: women marry men to whom they relate as equals, and are promised "perfect happiness." Thus in Austen's conventionalized endings readers enter the realm of "true and familiar comfort" that, according to Bakhtin, constitutes the proper milieu for unofficial, festive laughter, in the sense that the requirements that women show respect and obedience to men are lifted.

The novels, as we shall see, transpire such realms as worlds which never exist, (a milieu which purports to be part of early nineteenth century English society and at the same

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<sup>12</sup>Elizabeth Langford, *Registry in the Novel* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 34.

time guarantees "perfect happiness" to all, and particularly to married women, is by definition impossible.) This recognition is achieved by separating the ending from the "real" fictional world of the preceding narratives through ironic narrative means. The narrative techniques in question, which will be examined below, achieve by other means what Bakhtin describes in a medieval play as the erasing of boundaries between dramatic action and life. Instead of cynically announcing "footlights" that "separate the play from real life" (1988, 187), what Austen's final chapters do is call attention to the presence of the footlights, to the strings that move the puppets, to all the artificial devices by which fictional illusion is created. The happiness provided is thus revealed as part of the dramatic illusion-creating devices ( scenery, puppets, lighting, etc.), and seems to be at variance with the overall skeptical tone of the preceding action.

For Austen, individuals can only exist in dialogue with a community and the conventions and yet neither are individuals "naturally" good, nor is community intrinsically benevolent. Only a vigilant skepticism, often forcing individuals to distrust their own motives as much as their neighbors', will allow for individual growth. Furthermore, although characters like Mary, who initially does not remain open to possible communication with others or to potential community, are criticized, the actual communities (Pemberley,

Highway) are profoundly flawed. And of course, individual males who respect the women they marry cannot abolish all the social conditions that conspire against equality in marriage, nor can they create a society where women's powers may be usefully employed outside of child-rearing. That Austen was aware of such severe limitations on a woman's possibilities for happiness is evident in her portraits of older women who often provide indications of what may befall the heroine. Thus we have, for Catherine, the portrait of Mrs Harland exhausted "at the end of a morning" spent teaching her many children; for Elizabeth Bennet, the image of Mrs Gardiner at Pemberley, feeling the heat and tired from their walk, still having to wait while her husband looks at the trout (FF, 224); Mrs Deane, the aunt-sister of Mrs Weston, married to a happy-tempered son, but needing to exert himself like a "sweet-tempered woman and a good wife" to fulfil her duties and to look severely upon his excessive amiability (cf. F, 28, 278); and also Miss Bates' comments about "how much trouble" Mrs Weston has had in preparing the party at the Crown, E, 212]. Perhaps the most poignant portrait is that of Mrs Croft, "an intelligent and benevolent as any of the officers around her" (F, 184), and yet lacking her own field of employment in which to exercise her powers).

Not only women's fates are subject to Austen's scepticism. Culture itself is suspect, for language inevitably offers diametric ways of understanding the world

that often become oversimplifying containers into which all experience must be poured. These cultural concepts correspond to what Bakhtin calls "centrifugal forces" in language, tending to ideological uniformity, seeking to insure "a nucleus of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (28-272). Then to their opposite, the centrifugal forces of heterogeneity, or multi-linguagedness, that may give rise to dialogue. In Austen's novels we see these centrifugal forces operating when characters use conventional, unexamined-sounding labels and social norms into which reality is forced as characters attempt to understand their experience. Such labels and norms cover innumerable topics, from the relative merits of different muslins to the need for young women to lose flowers as they will go out and marry, to the propriety of young women riding about the country with young men in open carriages or the appearance of old abbots and the villainous character of their owners (Hansberry, *Edgar*) or from the need of simple young men in possession of a good fortune or the requirements for a woman to deserve the title of "accomplished," to the pleasure a young woman's beautiful eyes can give or the proper parental attitude toward a daughter who lives with a young man before she carries him (*Edgar and Elizabeth*). From "business letters" from a stepson to his father's new bride or what constitutes the standard of perfection in young men, to the attraction men find toward submissive women or the power of a person's virtue and

superior ability to make inferior beings acknowledge superiority (Jung). The many ideological labels and terms put into play in the narrative area most often to be viewed by readers ironically, as clichés.

In spite of his narrow image among literary critics, Nabokov is not such a champion of artistic freedom as to be oblivious to the weight of those homogenizing, monologic forces. As Gary Karsen puts it,

the dominant image is now that of the "illustrious Nabokov," the apostle of freedom who rejoices, Nabokov-like, in the ordering of chaos, in centrifugal energy, in carnival dancing, in carnival as locomotive, and in any denials of authorship. . . . But Nabokov is fast insulating himself against that sort of thought better than it at first appears. Judging his work only by the example of his best-known middle period but by the evaluation of his work as a whole, Nabokov is, if anything, an apostle of centralism.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, Nabokov and his circle realize that individuals cannot differentiate themselves radically from their culture; even the personal contents of their words are merely the result of a reworking of "ideological themes."<sup>53</sup> Inventive freedom, which can "liberate from the prevailing point of view in the world, from conventions and established truths," can be achieved only through "the combination of a variety of

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<sup>52</sup>Gary Karsen, "Problems with Nabokov's Pastimes," *Slavic and East European Journal* 11 (Winter 1967), p. 367.

<sup>53</sup>Vladimir Vinogradov, Nabokov and the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 12. [This and other texts have been attributed to Nabokov, but there is no conclusive evidence. The "disputed texts" by Nabokov and Vinogradov do seem to mesh easily with Nabokov's thought.]

different elements and their representation. . . ." (EW, p. 14). Even when inventing, the available elements, the ideological patterns in which a person must dress himself, are "always too tight, and thus coming."<sup>24</sup>

From a Bakhtinian perspective, we could see Austen's narrative laughing at these themes as generalizations rooted in cultural attitudes, that, although indisputable, often impoverish the mind, leading characters to error. The novelist's work could then be engaged in dialogue with conventions that may lead to characters' alienation. The utopian solutions Austen reaches in her endings could be compared to new forms of making dress, critical reexaminations of old clothes.

At times, however, one feels that Bakhtin's theories, with their novel, original approach from the perspective of the seemingly powerless, are insufficient to explore the ways in which official ideologies respond to popular or feminist contentions. I believe the problem in Bakhtin is not so much excessive optimism as it is an imbalance, a determination to investigate the counterweight forces in a language (that traditional linguistics had overlooked) to the detriment of an exploration of the counterpoised ones. In order to explore Austen's awareness of the counterpoised pull, of the force and attractiveness of established truths, of women's relations to

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<sup>24</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, "Folio and the Novel," in *Dialectic Imagination*, p. 17.

power, we must make use of other theoretical tools, to serve as complements to Bakhtin's and fill in the gaps left by the application of his concepts.

One obvious choice for such a derivation or balancing of Bakhtinian ideas is Foucault, whose analysis of power may help us to understand how "officialness" may resort to carnival. If Bakhtin may be seen, in the words of Graham Foster, as overemphasizing "the political effectivity of the disciplining and normalizing forces to which [a socialist hegemony] is opposed,"<sup>48</sup> I believe it is partly because "disciplining" is often seen as a preparation for eventual overthrow. From such a perspective, freedom is only reached after a decided victory: if the dominant group remains strongly in power, it must be because surveillance freedom has been an alienating illusion, and carnival has failed. Foucault, on the other hand, proposes an understanding of freedom, not as an either/or pursuit, but "as an agency, . . . a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation."<sup>49</sup> Emancipation, also, is not merely a crushing of an underclass by those above, but "a

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<sup>48</sup>Graham Foster, "On the Borders of Bakhtin," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, eds. Ben Knicker and David Shepherd (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 31.

<sup>49</sup>Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. Robert L. Guggen and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 318.

general structure of power whose ramifications and consequences can sometimes be found descending to the most insouciant fibers of society." Rather than achieving a decided victory or defeat, the structure of power is "more or less taken for granted and consolidated by means of a long-term confrontation between adversaries."<sup>127</sup>

Within this perspective, we may see the laughter of carnival as a form of resistance cunningly taking advantage of weak points in the ideological structure, as a hope of response that the dominant ideology must in turn reckon with, respond to, attempt to neutralize. As a result, this ideology does not remain unchallenged and unchanged. The changes, it is true, are not equal to a triumph, to a defiant declaration of independence, to a definitive granting of freedom, among other things because the "two sides" are probably not as clearly demarcated as the labels "official" and "carnival" would seem to suggest. But the dominant structures, however complex and fragmented their opposition, are forced to transform themselves, and the alterations become evidence against the eternal validity of official ideology, setting fire not perhaps smoldering cracks in the monolith.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Freudson, "Subject and Power," p. 124.

<sup>128</sup>This understanding of the process seems to help to explain why popular-carnival traditions and jest-makers, that for a long time appeared to serve only as a valve for discontent, and then to work for stability, could ultimately show that laughter "was a potentially subversive force, needing careful control." That, "as long as the social hierarchy itself went unchallenged, the rites of inversion



At the same time, it is not only the attitude of contestation that is fragmented: power, according to Foucault, circulates through the social practices of those who are held down by it. As we shall see, middle-class women can be shown to play an important social and political role in upholding the structures that maintain them in obedience, collaborating in the generalized surveillance of their friends and neighbors. Henry Tilney alludes to such surveillance in his famous phrase about "a neighbourhood of voluntary spies"; Elizabeth Barrett briefly acknowledges it in her comment on neighbors "intomphing over us at a distance" when Lydia elopes, and in her famous remarks about the disappointment of Fanny's "spiteful old ladies" when Lydia neither becomes a prostitute nor returns to be secluded forever in a distant foreign house: it is, finally, embodied in all the obstacles Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill encounter, mostly in the form of kindness from their well-meaning friends. These friends, from Mrs. Weston to Mr. John Knightley, without willing as directly as Mrs. Elton in Jane's affairs, do argue against Jane's walking in early weather to the post-office for her letters from Frank. Even the excellent Mr. Knightley will interpose in the two lovers' enjoyment of their rare moments together, asking Miss Bates to stop Jane from singing any longer in a

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could be easily interpreted; their very loyalty reflected an underlying severity. But once we had begun to question the principles of that hierarchy, then an actual ritual which emphasized its arbitrary nature came to seem positively dangerous" (Smith Thomas, p. 73).

dust with Frank when her voice thickens after only two songs (II, 124); his paternalistic, protective instincts probably led him to cut short a session of covert reminiscing on the part of the two lovers, who had sung the same songs at Weymouth, where they fell in love and became engaged.<sup>107</sup> In such a community as Highbury, both males and females cooperate to control relations between the sexes.

But surveillance is not the only social and political role women play in Austen's novels. In *Emma* we have her one heroine who, though single, is already a housewife, "anonymous at Eastfield." The young woman plays a domestic role while at the same time moving towards growth, love and marriage in typical Austenian progression. From a feminist perspective, as used by Elizabeth Langland to study domestic ideology, Emma will be shown to play an important social and political role in managing her family's funds "toward the acquisition of social and political status"<sup>108</sup> and in interacting with the religious and various sectors of the

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<sup>107</sup> Emma's narration reveals that Frank and Jane "had sung together once or twice . . . at Weymouth" (II, 117). The morning after the party at the Cobles', Frank and Mrs Weston visit the Bassets, and are later joined by Emma; there, again, Jane and Frank communicate covertly when she plays the lute "dressed at Weymouth" and "Emma, Adieu--his favourite." The words are Frank's, who seems to be alluding to Mr Bower in Highbury; the reader will suspect Frank is here acknowledging Jane's playing his own favorite tune.

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Langland, "Nobody's Angel: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel" (unpublished manuscript). I believe Langland's analysis can be successfully applied to the divorcee situation of women in fictional works written some decades before the Victorian era.

middle classness. However, this young woman, "clever, handsome, rich," with "nothing to upset or vex her," must come to realize that she, too, is one of those barred from power, the same power she transmits and upholds even while resisting it, and which defines her as one who cannot have had this one [domestic] form of power.

In the end, Austen's heroines will willingly enter into a marital relationship more egalitarian than work, but framed by a marital context severely limiting for married women. This study will investigate, among other narrative categories at play in the three novels, the feminist carnival of such utopian arrangements, as well as the strategies of power struggling within that context. It is only in *Emma* that this context is actively present from the beginning in the life of the heroine. It is in the analysis of *Emma*, then, that we will concentrate the discussion of women's assertion of power through domestic roles, and women's consequent powerlessness.

CHAPTER 1  
"NORTHANGER ABBEY":  
CARICATURE, OR THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXAGGERATED

This novel, the most explicitly parodic of Austen's mature works, is also the most playful. It probably owes much of its indie quality to its heroine, Catherine Morland, one of the youngest and certainly the most cheerful of Austenian protagonists. Looking mischievously behind its fun, however, there is something social criticism, especially of contemporary attitudes to and treatment of young girls.

*Northanger Abbey* joins the innocence of youth to the critical depth of maturity. It contains what are probably some of the earliest chunks of material found in any of Austen's mature novels, as well as successive layers of revisions, the last of which dates from 1814, less than a year before her death.<sup>1</sup> Some critics distinguish the main plot from the

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<sup>1</sup>Critics disagree on the chronology for this and the other novels, but they generally accept that *Northanger Abbey* underwent a series of revisions. According to tradition Jane Austen wrote her novels during two well-defined periods of her life, on the other hand, according to G. C. Lewis, Austen revised her works incessantly, inserting other material with new layers of revisions. Nevertheless, in spite of G. C. Southern's criticism of Mrs Lewis' theories, both writers consider *Northanger Abbey* an early work that was revised as late as 1814. (Cf. G. C. Lewis, "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," *Sewanee Review*, 18 (October and January 1911 and 1912), 114-19, 275-79) and G. C. Southern, "Introduction," *Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, A. Duckworth (London: Macmillan Press, 1974), pp. 11-24.) For a good summary of the

parodic chapters (2-15, 22-222), which they consider "detectable units" perhaps introduced later into the original story.<sup>7</sup> And yet the novelist's early interest in parody<sup>8</sup> seems so likely that at least some portions of the burlesque "satirist" were part of the early version.

In any case, it is evident that those passages containing references to Gothic and sentimental novels as well as comparisons between Catherine Morland and typical "heroines," constitute "a brilliant commentary on Catherine's general character and behavior."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the parody is integrated with other comic-strip devices, such as character names as Isabella, Anne and John, to invite laughter and to underscore Catherine's sentimental and moral education. The specific type of parody employed in *Northanger Abbey* and the

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traditional opinion that Jane Austen's writing career falls into two periods divided by the time she lived at Bath and Northampton (1801-1809), see A. Walton Litz, "Chronology of Composition," *The Jane Austen Companion*.

<sup>7</sup>Litz, *Jane Austen*, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup>Austen's juvenile delights in ridiculing the treatment of young women in conduct books; Frank Southbrook points out that every pleasure novel "the excessive respect for parental authority denigrated in the eighteenth-century conduct book." (*Jane Austen and Her Predecessors*, p. 27). As Lloyd W. Brown has said, Austen's early writings also turn the thematic motifs of sentimental novels upside down. For such pleasure as *Laura and Frederick* show sensibility rebuking, rather than upholding, "sensibilities, sentimentalism and stupidity . . ." (Lloyd W. Brown, *Life of Jane Austen* (New York: Oxford Press, 1942), p. 29).

<sup>9</sup>Litz, *Jane Austen*, p. 78.

paradoxism of its carnivalesque laughter must be understood before proceeding to discuss Catherine's Ulnovel.

Parody: The Ulnovel as "Barthesque Joke"

The novel's baroque passages, more than a subplot, can be seen as an "Ulnovel," a composite of all the deprecatibilities and campiness contained in the fictitious system had read and wished to satirize. The plot of Barthesque Joke itself may be considered as an inversion, a positive picture developed from an original negative impression: I employ the words "negative" and "positive" advisedly, for, as we shall see, the Ulnovel has a feminine protagonist who can be characterized as an innocent victim, while Catherine Barland's fictional life is nothing if not an affirmation. This statement might seem paradoxical, for Catherine is from the initial paragraph presented as an anti-heroine:

No one who had ever seen Catherine Barland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a dissolute, without being beguiled, as poor, and a very irresponsible man, though his name was Richard--and he had never been married. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings--and he was not in the least attached to looking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had done some before Catherine was born and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as any body might expect, she still lived on--lived to have six children more--to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads and arms

and large enough for the country but the Norlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, no plain as any. She had a thin robust figure, a ruddy skin without any colour, dark black hair, and strong features,—as much for her person—and not less dispositions for heron as toward her mind. She was fond of all paper plays, and greatly preferred cricket and tennis to dolls. But to the more heroic enjoyments of industry, nursing a sickroom, feeding a country-bird, or visiting a tomb. Indeed she had no taste for a garden and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of planting—at least as it was conjectured from her scruple preserving those which she was destined to take. Both were her propensities—her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand any thing before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. (pp. 11-14)

Thus the novel immediately establishes that its protagonist is unlike other heroines—and that this is a novel unlike others, since it compares itself to other novels. What makes Catherine different from other heroines is precisely what makes her such like "ordinary" people, for she and her family are middle-class, plain, and unremarkable, as are "her propensities" and "her abilities." In this way this novel reverses the meanings of ordinary and extraordinary: within this narrative, to be like the average, "middling" group of people will be counted as extra-ordinary. For, it is implied, a novel is a fiction whose protagonists must be, by ordinary, everyday standards, extra-ordinary. An ordinary heroine must then be the opposite of an ordinary, "real-life" young woman. If a heroine follows the anti-fictional, ordinary norm, she can be counted as opposite to novelistic standards, i.e.,

appeared in its opposition, and thus extraordinary *qua* knowing. This particular novel will be shown as atypical because its whole narrative world will be related to the real world, not as its representation, but as the reverse of what appears to be an inverse copy.

### Subversion the language of Sentimental Fiction

It must be stressed that "reality" is not the actual starting point in this chain of images; what naive novelists and critics may call the "real world" is as much a fabrication as their own fictions.<sup>5</sup> An early premise of Norton's work was that the exceptionality and extraordinariness of novels was a novelist's illusion based on a misconception that oversimplified what in *Northanger Abbey* she will call "the common feelings of common life" (84, 140). It is this complex attitude in the relationship between reality and art that underlies the opposition, in the initial paragraph of *Northanger Abbey* quoted above, between being "a clergyman" and being "neglected, or poor," and between being "a very respectable man" and being named Richard. This accounts for

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<sup>5</sup>As Susan Stewart suggests, realistic works are based on either symbolic constructions as such as narrative scenes, the two types simply operate as different "systems of meaning" and communicative codes. While realism "partakes of...the ideology and the rhetoric of the everyday lifeworld," narrative is one type of representation which "travels and manipulates not only the domain of common sense, but the domains of other kinds of fictions as well." This "fiction about fictions" takes place "in narrative content" and foregrounds "the cultural nature of signification," exposing "systems of interpretation, as systems," Susan Stewart, *Emotional Subjects of Intertextuality in Fictions and Literary Criticism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), pp. 20-21.]



of adjectives between qualities that are not opposed was already one of the jokes in "Jack and Alice," a piece written, according to Chapman, sometime between Austen's twelfth and her fifteenth year. The passage in question has traditionally been interpreted as a parody of Johnsonian "periods," or balanced clauses. I believe there is more at play in it, as becomes evident if the paragraph is taken as a whole:

In Lady Williams every virtue met. She was a widow with a handsome fortune & the remains of a very handsome dowry. *She* benevolent & candid, she was generous & sincere; *she* plain & good, she was religious & amiable, and *she* elegant & agreeable, she was polished & entertaining. ("Jack and Alice," ed., 11)

The last three clauses obviously satirize rhetorical devices that may be more Euphuistic than Johnsonian: of the four adjectives contained in each clause, the first and third are synonyms, as are the second and fourth. Following rhetorical expectations, the reader feels they should be antonyms, because of the use of the adjective, "*she*." If we observe the first two sentences, however, it becomes clear that the absurdity extends to all the qualities of Lady Williams as a fictional character: her property and her unblemished face count as virtues. Since Lady Williams is a literary type, "a gracious and virtuous lady," she will of course conform to the requisites of fortune and appearance. In Chapter 1 of Elizabethan Abbey we find a similar parody of literary stereotyping when we are told that, although Catherine "never

could learn or understand anything before she was taught," and  
 "she studied her lessons . . . whenever she could,"

with all these symptoms of prodigality at ten years old. She had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper: was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions or tyrannies she was generous, easy and wild, tacit, confident and circumspect, and loved walking as well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house. [84, 14]

Because she is both wickedness and good-tempered, Catherine is termed "winsome and unaccountable"; thus it is hinted that characters who are not angels in childhood must be preparing to grow up as villains. In this way the novel unveils the implicit assumptions of such fiction, showing the absurdity of these stereotypical, underlying assumptions.

It seems likely that some literary cliché is also being alluded to in the specific case of the qualities of Catherine's father. It is not easy, however, to discover in the novel whether or parodied is *Richard III*. After any indication of Richard being a villainous man--perhaps a reference to Richard III is meant,<sup>7</sup> which seems to bear no connection to this narrative. Faced with this problem,

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<sup>7</sup>Richard III appears at least twice in the *Journal*, once indirectly in the "History of England," and defended by Edward Stanley in a discussion with Catherine Farnival in "Catherine of the House." In both cases Austen's position is difficult to deduce: the first place is supposedly narrated by "a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant historian" (Baron Mordaunt, p. 119), while Edward Stanley was hardly to be considered a spokesman for the narrator of the story. On the other hand, there is some indication that Catherine's position is to be considered objective, in which case Richard would be, in Austen's view, a villain indeed.

tradition has associated that the situation is to a large intelligible only to the Austen family. However that may be, I believe we may find other meaningful possibilities. If we turn to the novel *Austen* is parodying in *Elizabeth Bennet*, especially to the ones she herself mentions in the famous passage at the end of Chapter V ("Cecilia, Cecilia and William"---22, 23), we discover a very interesting use of the adverbial, especially in *Penny Hursey*. In Cecilia, for instance, in the third paragraph we are told that "(Cecilia's) ancestors had been rich farmers in the county of Suffolk, though her father, in whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the capacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private country gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his estate, to live upon what he inherited from the labour of his predecessors."<sup>1</sup> The use of "though" opposes below a rich farmer to being a private country gentleman, implying that rich farmers are usually led by their capacity to go into either public or urban life, or perhaps to abandon traditional methods of cultivation in preference of the progressive farming associated with the Agrarian Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not Hursey went to imply this, her use of the adverb is frequent, especially in opening chapters. In Cecilia, for instance, we read that "(Mr. Tyrrel's) estate was increasing,

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<sup>1</sup>Penny Hursey, *Cecilia*, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1908), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to Elizabeth Duckworth for the latter suggestion (personal communication).

though his judgment was indignant."<sup>28</sup> From this passage it can be inferred that perfect equity is usually accompanied by stringent judgment, and that justice and leniency are opposites.

Both images, that of rapacious wealth and that of stringent equity, are common generalizations, no more absurd than any other stereotype. Such clichés are necessary crutches for everyday life and speech; to call them into question seems pedantic and boring, like Henry Thoreau, "more alive than wise" (NA, 108). However, I believe in her statement about the respectability of Mr. Marland "though his name was Richard" Austen is revealing the illogical use of the adverbial *though*, "though," more as a specimen of the general attitude toward reality and fiction on the part of sentimental novelists than as a defense on their logic. If adverbials abound, Austen seems to be saying, it is because novelists yearn to distinguish themselves, to set themselves up in opposition to the commonplace, the usual, the ordinary. For the typical sentimental novel, the world of ordinary people was self-evident, and therefore insufficient, unsatisfactory, boring. Such is the inescapable conclusion one derives from the fictions, not only of Richardson and Burney, but of Rousseau and Goethe as well. It was this dissatisfaction with ordinary reality as too bland that led them to create such

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<sup>28</sup>Henry Burney, *Candide* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 8.

extraordinarily sensitive beings as their heroes and heroines. A passage such as the following (in which the use of "though" is unexceptionable, by the way) is typical of novelistic accounts of the exaggerated virtues of such heroines:

But though thus largely indebted to fortune, to nature [Cecilia] had yet greater obligations: her form was elegant, her heart was liberal; her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with understanding and now glistered with sensibility.<sup>1</sup>

Such a heroine Catherine Morland was not, and so this novel announces from the beginning, comparing its protagonist to the typical, unblissfully sensitive heroine. By "sampling at the deity" (MW, 8) that rules over novels, Austen produces the seriousness and solemnity of many fictions. Such an act constitutes a most carnivalesque use of language, of the world turned upside down--only the world reversed is a fictional world, which itself is an inversion of what novelists think they know about reality. (Austen, of course, is also a novelist, and so she cannot escape the pitfalls of her subject: of this fact she is clearly aware, and she makes it part of the carnivalesque fun of Northanger Abbey, as we shall see.) In this novel Northanger Abbey evokes what Bakhtin considers the effect of works of grotesque realism: "to degrade, bring down to earth, turn their subject into flesh" (MW, 204). It is not the flesh of "the lower bodily stratum," but it is,

<sup>1</sup>Burney, *Cecilia*, p. 2.

nevertheless, the Breughelian flash that tears curtains and breathes through evident, sometimes naughty, pores.

It is important to understand the role of this reversal, this interest in paradoxes, at the core of Postmodern Abbey. Instead of seeing its parodic elements as undigested parts of the narrative, The novel has appeared closed to any critic because of the separation they establish between the "novel's satirical element" and its "main concern--the story of Catherine Merland's development from girlhood to comparative intellectual and emotional maturity."<sup>12</sup> This study will argue that the satire of Fiction in Meriburger Abbey does not "interfere with more important business,"<sup>13</sup> but, on the contrary, illuminates the story of her development to maturity. Indeed, her growth as a woman must be seen against the background of the satirical allusions we have called POSTMODERN Abbey's Er-nest.

As we have shown, the Er-novel begins from the initial paragraph, which already poses the problem of the relation between art and life. A related issue, that of intertextuality, is approached through a satire of the use of literary quotations in novels. Accordingly, we are told that, in spite of her unassuming beginning, Catherine Merland "from fifteen to seventeen was in training for a heroine; she read all such

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<sup>12</sup>Samuel L. Weber, Jane Austen's Art of Allusion (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1948), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup>Weber, Jane Austen's ART OF ALLUSION, p. 23.

works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations that are so servicable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives." (BA, 18). This passage has been taken as a parody of Emma's. "a good representative of the type" of heroine of which Catherine seems to be a deliberate inversion.<sup>14</sup> The choice of quotations Catherine is supplied with is indeed "precisely in Mrs Smith's manner, . . ." <sup>15</sup> However, Emma is only one of the many characters alluded to by Austen's satire on Mary Leveson's observed, "there is a great similarity among the heroines of that age."<sup>16</sup> It is precisely this commonness that provides the basis for the satire.

Part of Austen's point is to parody the use of literary quotations in novels, and thus the turning of art into life. A related point is to allude to the particular image of young womenhood these novels have to draw from literature. Together, the quotations Austen chooses as examples of Catherine's reading paint a picture of female youth as helpless, delusive, dependent and victimised (cf. BA, 13-18). The first three quotations are significant for the titles of the works they come from as much as for their content: Pope's

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Mary Leveson, *Jane Austen and Her Art*, p. 48, n. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Henry Shakespeare, "Introduction," Emma, The Novels of Jane Austen (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. xiii.

<sup>16</sup> Leveson, *Jane Austen and Her Art*, p. 48, n. 1.

"To the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady," Gray's "Woe," and Thomson's "Spring." The three great Shakespeares (from *Titus Andronicus*, *Measure for Measure* and *Twelfth Night*, respectively) deal with women in love as victims, with pain and death, and exquisite loneliness and suffering.

This portrait is in keeping with the general trend of sentimental novels to exaggerate the sufferings of the protagonist as much as her qualities. If the typical heroine of novels is exceptionally beautiful, sensitive and intelligent, her fate is no less extraordinary, for she is the victim of many "vicissitudes." These two characteristics, extraordinary qualities and extraordinary suffering, seem to be the predominant motifs in all the allusions, running throughout *Northanger Abbey*, to the ways in which Catherine Morland and her fellows depart from sentimental ones.

These allusions are in fact so often repeated that in the view of one critic these passages exhibit an "obsessive tendency" on the part of the author.<sup>17</sup> I believe the repetition, more than an obsession, shows the narrator's delight in "carnivalesque parody on sacred texts" (PDP, 213). In this case the sacrosanct purity of sentimental novels. The reader who can be moved to respond to many of the best sentimental novels of the late eighteenth and early

<sup>17</sup>See Fergus, *Jane Austen and the Romantic Novel* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1963), p. 42.



nineteenth centuries, but also at the same time recognizes their absorption, will never tire of the varied ways in which the narrator's wit will oppose the high-flown style of sentimental and Gothic fiction to genuine details of "ordinary life."

If we string together all the allusions to what does not happen to Catherine, turning the statements of what Catherine is not into statements of what the typical heroine is, we obtain a story which illuminates, by inversion, the story of Catherine's growth as a woman. In this story we may also discover some of the likely sources for such episodes among the novels by Austen's predecessors and contemporaries...

#### The Criminal

As we have seen in the opening paragraph of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen's first novel begins with a heroine in her childhood. Her father is a tyrant, given to "looking up his daughters," (cf. Richardson's *Clarissa*<sup>18</sup>, Fielding's *Tom Jones*<sup>19</sup>) while the mother has died after giving birth to her (cf. Henry Burney's *Evans*,<sup>20</sup> Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*).<sup>21</sup> The young woman has no siblings (BA, 11). The protagonist of

<sup>18</sup>See Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (London: Text & Note, 1942).

<sup>19</sup>Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (New York: Random House, 1749), p. 118.

<sup>20</sup>*Evans, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1764) Vol. I, Letter II, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>*Emmeline*, Vol. I, Ch. 1, p. 1.

this novel (henceforth "Herculio") is "a beauty from her country" (NA, 18). She is also delicately sensitive, and prefers picking flowers, feeding birds, and nursing small animals to any physical activity (as did Marianna in Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House*<sup>22</sup> and Mary in Wolstonecraft's *Mary, a Fiction*<sup>23</sup> NA, 12). Herculio is also exceptionally intelligent (cf. Mary Hey's *MARIANNA OF BATH*, *Continued*, Harvey's *Camilla*, Charlotte Smith's *Emeline*). Learning many things without being taught (cf. Smith's *Emeline*),<sup>24</sup> and showing talents for needle-writing (the protagonist in Mary Wolstonecraft's *Mary, a Fiction* wrote poetry from childhood),<sup>25</sup> drawing (*Emeline*)<sup>26</sup> and music (*Clarissa*),<sup>27</sup> *Emeline*<sup>28</sup> NA, 18).

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<sup>22</sup>*The Old Manor House* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>*Mary, a Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. the following passage from *Emeline*: "Wonderful at the defects of her education, she applied incessantly to her books. Her of every useful and ornamental domestic employment she had long since made herself mistress without any instruction" (London: Oxford University Press, 1871, p. 41.)

<sup>25</sup>*Mary, a Fiction*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>Another passage from *Northanger Abbey* comments on Catherine's delinquencies as a beginner in having "no notion of drawing--not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the design" (NA, 14). Cf. Bolander's discovery of a drawing of himself inside *Emeline*'s music book--*Emeline*, p. 155.

<sup>27</sup>*Clarissa*, Vol. 1, p. 174.

<sup>28</sup>Vol. 2, Ch. xiv, p. 168.

As soon as the sensitive young womanhood, *Berowne* inspires many passions in a variety of men, among whom there are tainted characters (as was the case of the admirers of *Harriet Byron* in Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*,<sup>17</sup> and of the protagonists in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*),<sup>18</sup> as well as a young man of unknown origin (cf. Fielding's *Tom Jones* 28, 11). When *Berowne* leaves her home, she encounters frightful events and unknown forces her "way to some remote lone house" (cf. Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*,<sup>19</sup> 28, 149). During her journey she is visited, and a lucky encounter introduces her here (cf. Edgeworth's *The Vicar of Wakefield*,<sup>20</sup> Mary Meyer *Madison of Ross Country*,<sup>21</sup> 28, 18). She appears in society with a chaplain, who will contribute to reduce *Berowne* "to all the desperate wretchedness of which a lost virtue is capable" (28, 38). This chaplain will interrupt her letters, ruin her character and turn her out of doors (28, 38). (Among the possible candidates for the original chaplain we have *Tristram's* Rev. uncle, *Emeline's* Rev. father, *Madame Cheron*

<sup>17</sup>Cf. *Harriet Byron's* sister, *Sir Hargrave Pelloxian*, *Sir Charles Grandison*, Part I, Vol. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. *Sir Philip Raddley's* proposal, Edgeworth's *Belinda* (London: J. B. Goss & Co., 1891), Vol. 1, Ch. XIII, pp. 179-80.

<sup>19</sup>*Sir Charles Grandison*, Vol. 1, p. 136.

<sup>20</sup>*The Vicar of Wakefield* *Raphia* is thrown from her horse and saved by Mr. Barnwell, who will later marry her (New York: J. B. Goss & Co., p. 13).

<sup>21</sup>*Madison of Ross Country* (New York: Carleton Publishing Inc., 1974), p. 180.

in Anne Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Elsinore, Melissa Larsson in Eliza Follen's The Sybil of the Isles, and Mrs. Bergham in Emilia.) When heroine attends a ball, all men present start "with rapturous wonder on beholding her" and call her "a divinity" (cf. Sir Charles Scudamore EM, 21). Letters are written to her "in celebration of her charms" (Emilia)<sup>16</sup> EM, 24).

Veronica meets a widow who relates to her (in "three or four chapters") all her "past adventures and sufferings," which serve as evidence of "the worthlessness of lords and attorneys" (cf. Eliza Vercoe's The Castle of Wolfenbach)<sup>17</sup> EM, 11.) Veronica then suffers herself at the hands of villains, becoming "disgraced in the eyes of the world," appearing to be infamous "while the heart is all purity" (cf. Richardson's Clarissa, Smith's Emilia, Burney's Emilia, Emilia and Emilia; EM, 12.) She also suffers a misapprehension when, seeing the man she loves with another woman (his sister), she considers him "lost to her forever, by being married already" (Augusta, the new Emma Courtney loves, turns out to be married; EM, 12.) After suffering miseries, Veronica returns "as a pilgrim strewn with thorns and wet with tears" (all the heroines mentioned above.) Just when the heroine is preparing for a much-expected meeting with her lover, some diffic-

<sup>16</sup>Emilia, Vol. III, Letter XI, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup>The Castle of Wolfenbach. C. F. Vercoe, ed. The Northrop Set of Jane Austen Maria Vercoe (London: The Folio Press, 1987). pp. 82-83.

only crimes, some "sudden recollection," "unexpected shame," or "impertinent intrusion" intervenes (as it happens repeatedly in Harvey's *Emilia*,<sup>17</sup> and in Swift's *Emilia*,<sup>18</sup> pp. 144). Harvies's friend and confidante talks to her about her relationship with her lover, full of "such penetration and affectionate sympathy" for Harvies's misdeeds (as Kenneth Sauer suggests, we find such a confidante in Miss Mirvan, a character in Harvey's *Emilia*,<sup>19</sup> pp. 71, 117-8). In the course of one of these conversations, a young lady expresses the determination of proving that, if she had millions, even then her lover would be "her only choice" (cf. Virginia St Pierre's utterance, wishing to be very rich while Mr Harvey was poor, "that I might make him rich," *Emilia*,<sup>20</sup> pp. 118).

At one point, Harvies is persecuted by "three villains in Harvies's great coat, by whom she will be forced into a

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<sup>17</sup>On this novel, Corilla is repeatedly shown as she is about to explain her conduct to Edgar Woodhouse, who first suspects her of flirting with Major Curwood, and later of wishing to marry Lord Ralhurst; some "sudden recollection" often prevents her from doing so. In one typical passage, offended by Edgar's suspicions, she decides not "to risk such another look of his cold superiority": she therefore accepts Mrs Worlington's invitation, against the known Edgar disallows this acceptance. This decision of course reverses the distribution of her role to Edgar--Book VII, Ch. 2, p. 281.

<sup>18</sup>*Emilia* treats the man she loves, Godolphin, with "coldness and reserve," even after all serious obstacles to their union have been removed. She continues to hold back, it is said, from a series of quines and puns stemming from her "Gillsey" (*Emilia*, Vol. IV, Ch. viii, pp. 438-439.)

<sup>19</sup>Kenneth L. Sauer, *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Emilia*, Vol. II, Ch. xviii, p. 108.

travelling coach and four, which will drive off with incredible speed" (for Barbara Pakenham in My Darling Grandpa<sup>2</sup> and Theodore in Horrid Mysteries<sup>3</sup> investigate such abductions of the heroine; Ek, 121). In another version, heroine sees her gentleman whispering to her lover, and imagines that she is being murdered (in Burney's Edith, Emilia and Camilla the heroine's anxiety is often apparently compressed, suspended, and/or she is murdered.)

So far the U-boat has been building up through the narrator's comments on what is happening to Catherine in contrast to other heroines. At a certain point, however, Betty Tilney, the young man who will eventually marry Catherine, takes over the telling of the U-boat--except that this is not a story of what does not, but of what purportedly has, happen to Catherine. As he drives this young lady to Northanger Abbey, his home, where she will stay as a guest, he tells her a week-horror story of what has happen to her at such an old abbey, in her imagination as romantic as a Gothic castle. (I will call the heroine of his parodic narrative "Catherine"; he tells the story in second person, using "you" for the subject of his vicariously.) "Catherine" will be, indeed, he says, in essence "part from the rest of the family"

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<sup>2</sup>Jane Austen, My Darling Grandpa, vol. I, letter xlii, pp. 112-3.

<sup>3</sup>Horrid Mysteries, Ed. from the German of the Waggins of Waggins by Peter Hill (London: Felio Press, 1988), pp. 48-9.

[8A, 18E]. After narrating a few circumstances that create a frightful atmosphere (a portrait of a knight, a sinister old housekeeper--called Dorothy, like the housekeeper in *Dracula*, a room without a lock on the door), Henry tells her that, on the third night, "Catherine" will be frightened by a violent storm. While it rains she will notice a wall-hanging concealing a door, leading to a small vaulted room. "Catherine" will there discover an old ebony cabinet, in whose secret compartments she will find many chests of manuscript. When she is about to read it, her lamp will "suddenly expire in the socket," leaving her "in total darkness;"<sup>2</sup> 8A, 18G). The story ends there, for Henry is so seized by Catherine's naive, horrified interest in his story that he cannot go on.

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<sup>2</sup>The heroine who is lured along the dark rooms of a castle is so obsessed in Gothic fictions that it seems futile to attempt a list of predecessors of Henry's "Catherine". Emily St. Aubert in *Walden* goes through similar experiences, as does Fanny in Charlotte Smith's novel. As Anne Thompson points out, however, the earliest occurrence of such an episode in literature is found in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (Book 10, lines 1-100). The castle of *Pharsalia* (1744), Lucan's castle goes out in a sudden gust of wind while the king goes from an ominous tower ("Introduction," *Emilia*, p. 21.) On the other hand, incidents of young ladies persecuted along passages of Gothic castles occur in all the "Gothic novels" Lucan's George recommends to Catherine Morland. These novels (the *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clarelton*, *The Mysterious Marriage*, *Phantasmagoria of the Black Forest*, *Midnight Bell*, *Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries*) were for a long time supposed to have been once fully revealed by Austen. It wasn't until 1917 that Margaret Gomers, in an article in *The Essex Library-Supplement*, identified six of the seven novels as American reader provided some of the remaining one (D. P. Vane, "Introduction," *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, ed. D. P. Vane, The Gresham Set of Jane Austen Novels Series [London: The Folio Press, 1918], pp. xviii-xxi.)

Catherine will continue the story herself in her imagination, however. While staying at the Abbey, on three separate occasions she will believe she is on the verge of discovering some longburied secret. Each time she will conclude that she has only been foolishly indulging her fancy, with consequences which we will consider when we discuss her growth as a character. The *Novel* is not continued until Catherine returns home after her ignominious expulsion from Northanger Abbey. At that point we find her dedicated to her General's service, who returns, "at the close of her career, to her native village, in all the triumph of recovered reputation, and all the dignity of a countess" (NA, 344). Quaintly, Catherine returns to Northay Castle, not as a countess, but as its mistress, and is received "with transport" by Mrs. Stafford and "numberless tenants and dependants."<sup>26</sup>

Thus ends Northanger Abbey's *Novel*. Having thus placed it together, we can now analyze the story of Bertram. This fictional young lady is remarkable for her lack of response to the many plots against her; her languid demeanor and her tendency to physical reactions are coupled with her unusually contemplative interests. Bertram thus appears as the oxymoronic combination of ethereal spirit in a world governed by the too solid, laud flesh: she is always threatened by the selfishness of others, usually in the form

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<sup>26</sup>*Emilia*, p. 127.



of consciousness, which strives to defend, define, destroy her. While equipped by reging consciousness and good, she resists temptation. Unlike the heroes of traditional romances, who overcome temptation through the strength of their virtue, Narcissa is never tempted to fall into sin. But she is also, again unlike male romantic protagonists, unable to exert the slightest force in order to extricate herself from her many painful predicaments. The slightest occurrence, such as seeing her beloved with his sister, seriously threatens her peace of mind. She is so far from ever taking any initiative, that she does not even inquire about the identity of her presumed rival. Narcissa represents, therefore, a spirit of passivity that is, more than merely disinterested, utterly devoid of any energy but that which may be devoted to the enjoyment of exquisite suffering (or to placing herself in neediness, paralyzing danger).

From a narrative viewpoint, furthermore, Narcissa's story seems to exist on a level of Platonic ideals. Each episode seems to be a *schème*<sup>21</sup> untouched by time or change; each leads only to a repetition of similar episodes, without any progression. This lack of progression or movement is not surprising, since the *On-novel* is not told as a continuous, self-sufficient narrative, but as a running commentary on the

<sup>21</sup>I use the term "*schème*" in the sense of conceptual structures by use in understanding our experience of the world around us. For a discussion of *schèmes*, frames and scripts, see Ted van Dijk, *Stereotypes and Prejudices*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1981, pp. 218-242.

story of Catherine Morland. What is more significant is that, within each of the episodes, there is no possible advancement toward an object sought, simply because there is never any quest. At any given point of the narrative, heroine is no closer to achieving a goal than she is at any other point, simply because she has no quest, no capabilities for action, no desire. heroine's story presents the paradoxical characteristic of being attached by the "delusion" of becoming. But only do we find that time does not touch the protagonist, who remains essentially unchanged throughout the course of her "vicissitudes"; time does not even affect the story itself. In this sense, heroine is even more drastically outside time than the heroes of Greek romances who are described as acting

in adventure-time--they escape, defend themselves, engage in battle, save themselves--but they act, as it were, as merely physical persons, and the initiative does not belong to them. . . . In this time, persons are forever having things happen to them. . . . A purely adventurist's person is a person of chance. (PTOR, 81)

heroine, on the contrary, is not merely physical but merely motionless while heroes placed in "Greek adventure-time" are not rather than act, she does neither, for she can only feel. Her bondage to chance is even greater than that of heroes of Greek romances. It is therefore not surprising that her story should stop abruptly, unthinkingly. The narrative, capriciously interrupted, is resumed by a new narrator (Henry Tilney), who, interestingly enough, leaves his story

expressed. His "Catherine," who moves only lured by the attraction of placing herself in unnecessary danger, thus remains forever suspended in her veiled room, quaking with mortal terror in the darkness. If we can speak of a chronotope of Caroline's story, it must be one of endless repetition in suspended time and space.

Similarly, Catherine's own efforts at beginning stories leads nowhere. Her fanciful narrative of a wife's imprisonment does not evolve, but merely vanishes when confronted with everyday reality.<sup>42</sup> And then Caroline reappears, as whimsically as she had vanished from the novel; she turns up in order to disappear when her story simply ends at a randomly chosen point, by means of the device of narrating another "Richard type" of episode<sup>43</sup> having suffered a magical transformation, she returns triumphant to her native village. When the narrator decides that it is time to end the story, then, Caroline leaps from her state of suspended animation to a finale of fairy-tale happiness.

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<sup>42</sup>As we shall see, Henry Tilney, unexpectedly meeting Catherine as she returns from her detective-like search for clues into his mother's fate, attempts to persuade her (and the reader) that Catherine's language are totally fanciful. And yet his father's hypocritical behavior will later indicate that General Tilney may have indeed kidnapped his wife, though in more modern and precise ways than Catherine imagined.

<sup>43</sup>These stereotyped episodes are seriously similar to the "functions" Fropp found to make up one basic motif for the folk-tale (cf. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, tr. Lawrence Scott [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968]).

Of course, no heroine of the novel is allowed to in the tri-novel reaches such a degree of passivity as heroine. To understand how the tri-novel serves as a contrasting medium to the story of Catherine Morland we must examine in depth those traits of contemporary novel in which was cooperating.

#### Woman in Sentimental and Gothic Novels

Elizabeth Gaskell criticized an image of the novelistic heroine based on an ideological position regarding women that, while seeking to revise emotional anti-feminist views, ultimately led to reaffirm them. In contrast to heroine's vaporous emotionlessness, other characters in the tri-novel are gripped by highly charged passions. While chapmans are often disengaged able old ladies, the source of most of the excitement is minor fathers and villains are met often the persecutors, though lords and attorneys also intervene. The tri-novel, therefore, points to a tendency in sentimental and gothic novels to idealize the feminine protagonist, contrasting this idealism to the young women's innocence. Paradoxically, however, as generalized as this anti-patriarchal stereotype of women's impotence before men's injustice that we may even speak of an official novelistic ideology of the victimization of femininity.

As a matter of fact, in the contemporary novels themselves we find allusions to novelistic stereotypes. One heroine (Elizabeth Gaskell of Charlotte Smith's Deceit) is a letter to her sister specifically links gothic stories to the

unending of male victimization of women. Unfortunately, Caroline seems to read such fiction too late, when she is already a victim of a greedy family and an even greedier and more heartless husband, who is planning to sell her to a rich duke. Nevertheless, her summary of the typical plot of Gothic novels is useful, as is her description of her own reactions as a reader:

I ran through [novels] with extreme avidity . . . and devoured with an eager appetite the Arabian paper that told of diamonds, most exquisitely bewitched, confined by a cruel father, and sleeping in a heroic lover, while a wicked Lord laid in wait to tear her from him, and carried her off to some remote castle--These delighted me most that ended happily and having tortured me through the best volume with impossible distress, ended in the triumph of the heroine. Had the imagination of a young person been liable to be much affected by these sort of histories, she would, probably, have taken a romantic turn, and at sixteen, when I was married, I should have hesitated whether I should obey my friends directions, or have waited till the hero appeared. . . . But, far from dying so, I was, you see, "shadient--very shadient."

Caroline Johnson interprets this passage as evidence of the way in which "reform-minded novelists" like Charlotte Smith, who "combined politics and gothicism most regularly," used Gothic as a background of female injustice to politicize the heroine's persecution as a symbol of both class and gender oppression. The images in question "would seem implicitly to serve the progressive agenda to protect the powerless and the

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<sup>21</sup>Charlotte Smith, *Emmaus* (New York: Garland Publishing Co.) vol. 12, p. 124.

feminine from the clutches of a sleeping but still powerful patriarchy."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that Gethse takes appeal to Gertrude as an easy reactionary take, even an invitation to insubordination against patriarchal injustice. And yet, through Gertrude's Cartesianism that an early reading of such stories may have awakened her to insurrection, we see her "delighting" in those tales where the heroines meet the most miserable ends. The neo-classic pleasure of the reader is underlined: both reader and heroine are extremely passive. Furthermore, Gertrude hopes only to be rescued by someone, another male, from the intrigues of her husband. Ultimately, the novel Gertrude has read only serves to romanticize feminine passivity before male persecution.

In spite of her progressive political sympathies, Charlotte Smith is not far in her feminist protest from the more conservative Ann Radcliffe. Smith starts by protesting patriarchy and ends by presenting male figures as the fictional saviors and protectors of young women who often narrowly fail to be released from bondage. Radcliffe, on the other hand, subscribes to moderation and recommends respect for established authority, yet unconsciously paints a picture of male tyranny that applies equally well to dark despots and benevolent patriarchs. As Claudia Johnson observes, in spite of the surface strain of paternalism in *The Mysteries of*

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<sup>2</sup>Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen*, pp. 12-3.

Edgardo, when Melchior has the villain Montoni force Emily into marriage to consolidate his wealth, she "is describing what patriarchal society daily permits as a matter of course" in consequence, "protectors of order and agents of tyranny can look alarmingly alike."<sup>22</sup>

Even the typical heroine's morbid passivity, furthermore, can be seen as an unconscious response to women's grotesquely constituting situation. As David Cotton has shown, the feminine body in Melchior's fiction is governed by neurotic reactions, "visions, synapses and tremors." Even when these fictional young women are neither being forcibly carried away, unconscious, or paralyzed by fear, they "frequently find their bodies beyond their control." In a quivering lip, a lowered eyelid or a blushing cheek, the heroines of Melchior's novels "find their bodies betraying them. . . , speaking for them when they desire to be narrative or, in the more extreme situations of paranoia and unconsciousness, stealing from them all power of response." This uncontrollable body is rebelling against an immense "pressure for decorous behavior," expressing "an otherwise insurmountable conflict between the desire for expression and the fear of impropriety."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Freeman, *Jane Austen's Novels*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>23</sup>David Cotton, *The Silenced Imagination: A Study of Jane Melchior, Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1989, pp. 62-63.

The heroine's typical predicament in Restoration fiction is of course a symptom of and a response to contemporary social situations. In this sense Anne Radcliffe's novels meaningfully interact with patriarchy; they might even be said to bear witness to the depth of its misogyny. Nevertheless, the glorification of the neuroticistic body and the antineuroticistic revelling in victimisation are ultimately politically self-defeating postures. In *Ortens* moreover, a heroine's suffering confirms her delirium, for "the distance of [her] character as measured by how rude the world appears in contrast to it."<sup>20</sup> This valuation of "delirium" not only poses impossibly high and rarefied standards for feminine conduct, it furthermore binds women to total passivity.

Though so far we have been referring exclusively to Gothic fictions, a similar ambiguity regarding feminist issues can be observed in sentimental novels, again on both sides of the political divide. Of many of Harvey's narratives, for instance, we could say, paraphrasing Hawthorne's *Mother's* contradictory statement, that it is uncertain whether their tendency be altogether to recommend the hero's tyranny or reveal the heroine's disobedience (cf. 88, 202). In *Camilla*, for instance, the protagonist's virtue is constantly suspected by the excessively prudish, repressive hero, Edgar Montclair. Thus, for instance, he objects to her pursuing Mrs. Ardenbury's acquaintance, whom he thinks too witty and lively, although

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<sup>20</sup>*Ortens*, pp. 21-22.



"she was a source of reputation as well as fashion," she was moreover kind and charitable.<sup>51</sup> He also objects to her accepting her friend Mrs. Kensington's invitation, and reportedly appears "agonized by suspense and doubt." This attitude, however, only serves to provide rebelliousness in the heroine, who tends to do the opposite of what he advises. "For her wounded spirit panted to prove its independence and dignity."<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, there is a suggestion that what Edgar Hawthorne objects to in Mrs. Arlbery is her satirical intelligence and independent spirit, which makes her equal Cecilia, an intelligent young lady, with such dangerous feminist remarks as the following:

[Men] are always oppressed with something that is both pretty and silly because they can do easily please and so many discomfort it; and when they have made the little blushing souls blush and look down, they feel really superior and pride themselves in victory. Poor creatures! I delight in their taste, for it brings them a possible harvest of repentance, when it is their miserable criterion the pretty glaze off, and the silly remedies, and I can say a choice companion for life left on his hands!

(As we shall see, Norton will allude to this passage in connection with Catherine's attractiveness for Henry Tilney due to her ignorance of "the picturesque" Mrs. Arlbery's remarks also obviously constitute one of the "feminist" sources

<sup>51</sup>Francis Harvey, *Samilla*, Book III, ch. xiii, p. 237.

<sup>52</sup>Cecilia, Book VII, ch. 8, p. 382.

<sup>53</sup>Cecilia, Book II, ch. xii, p. 188.

for the relationship between Mr and Mrs Barrett in *Friday and Franklin*.]

All of Burney's heroines are eventually placed, through no fault of their own, in compromising positions that give rise to doubts of their virtue. Even Cecilia, one of the most secure and self-possessed of Burney's heroines, is abandoned by Mr Monckton and suspected of being "seduced" by her father-in-law and even her husband. This loving young man must see her disgraced and near death before he will repent, calling himself "the wretch who for an instant could doubt the purity of a mind so susceptible," of course she forgives him, but not before he kneels before her, in an essay of self-abasement, admitting he has merited "reproach and aversion," and that he is unworthy of her forgiveness.<sup>13</sup>

While Cecilia and Cecilia dwell on feminine resentment against the too scrupulous moral demands which make of their chastity and obedience, Evelina puts the heroine in constant jeopardy due to man's insensitiveness. Nevertheless, while denouncing some men's "libertines towards women,"<sup>14</sup> the novel itself seems to recommend that young women cling to this protection, and to discourage their seeking independence.

Progressive women writers of sentimental novels show the same ambivalence towards women's situation. We have already

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<sup>13</sup>Samuel Burney, *Cecilia* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1846), Vol. II, Ch. 8, p. 148.

<sup>14</sup>cf. Burney, *Evelina*, pp. 11 and 115.

near her Charlotte Smith uses Corinna Clements as symbols of male tyranny, while her heroine ultimately retains an attitude of passive expectation of male protection. In *Emeline* we see the novelist repeating the pattern. Belmore, son of Lord Westcoteville and heir apparent to Mowbray Castle, persuades her with the dark determination of a Macbeth and the fire of a Werther. Emeline is said to be spirited and balanced, a young woman of uncommon "active firmness" and superior "understanding."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, she shows her mettle in a confrontation with Lady Westcoteville<sup>18</sup> that, as we shall see, serves a precursor of the meeting between Elizabeth Bennett and Lady Catherine (PP, Vol. III, Ch. xiv). And yet when malice torments her she acts very much like a "Helpians orphan." Whether she is persecuted along the dark passages of Mowbray Castle by night, or in Mrs Ashwood's garden in broad daylight, her response to every adverse circumstance is similar: she trembles, she pines, she weeps or she faints. In especially dire circumstances, as when she is abducted by Belmore, she falls into "an ecstacy of terror."<sup>19</sup> She is finally to accept the tutelage of Godefray; as soon as she admits to him that she loves him, he acquires authority over her: "Emeline seemed to be happier since she had confessed to Godefray his

<sup>17</sup>*Emeline*, Vol. I, Ch. 1, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>*Emeline*, Vol. II, Ch. xi, pp. 112-3.

<sup>19</sup>*Emeline*, Vol. IV, Ch. vi, p. 242.

Indifference over her mind, and since she had made him in some measure the director of her actions."<sup>42</sup>

Even those novels where women do not assume a posture of subjection to male authority insist on presenting women as helpless victims. Such is the case of Mary Wollstonecraft's Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman, written, as the title suggests, in protest against the plight of women. Maria is presented as a weak victim, a "fragile flower," cruelly "suffered to where a world exposed to the impact of . . . stormy elements."<sup>43</sup> This novel reiterates the claims made in A Declaration of the Rights of Woman that society corrupts women. By showing them "but one way of rising in the world, the fostering the superstitions of men, society makes monsters of (women), and then their ignoble vices are brought forward as a proof of inferiority of intellect."<sup>44</sup> Men are degraded in their sexuality, but women are affected also in their whole moral and intellectual being. Thus the worst aspect of the victimization of women is not their suffering, terrible though it is, but the fact that they are degraded "so far below their oppressors, as almost to justify their tyranny."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Emeline, Vol. IV, Ch. 4, p. 457.

<sup>43</sup>Wollstonecraft, The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria, in Fortunate Works of the Author of A Declaration of the Rights of Woman (London, n.d.; Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), Vol. I, p. 19. (First published in 1790.)

<sup>44</sup>Emeline, p. 174.

<sup>45</sup>Maria, Vol. II, p. 108.

Mary Wags would also insist that women were "rendered feeble and delicate by bodily constraint, and fastidious by artificial refinement."<sup>42</sup> Her heroine, Emma Courtney, in a dialogue with her mentor and friend, Mr. Fremont, will claim her own has made her more vulnerable:

"I thought you considered the plea of age, as a sanction for weakness!" [said MR. FREMONT.]

"Though I disclaim it as a refusal, I admit it as an artificial, plea . . . [the customs of society . . .] have enervated, enervated and degraded women."<sup>43</sup>

In spite of her "weakness," Emma will determinedly court Augustus Hartley, both in person and through letters. Her independence and originality, however, are limited to her obsessive pursuit of her lover; they are not carried to the point where she can conceive of living without him. Her feeling of worthlessness when she cannot hope to be loved is what painfully represents woman's stunted self. In the end, however, Emma will be neither a rebellious Werther nor a successful, Montaigne Julia, Rousseau's heroine, to whom she compares herself. Struggling to break loose from victimized femininity, she clings to the judgment passed on women as monstrous products of society. The result is that she is left in a void: rebellious, but helpless, she can only look out

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<sup>42</sup>Mary Wags, *ESSAYS OF EMMA COURTNEY* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), vol. 1, p. 88.

<sup>43</sup>Mary Wags, Vol. 1, pp. 78-9.

recently repined those who would help her. When Mr Francis would call her to Independence, Emma replied:

Why call women, miserable, oppressed, and impotent women--~~crushed, and then, smothered~~-- why call her to Independence--which . . . like herbarium and museum take of society, have denied her? This is mockery!"

Is this all that women could choose from in the eighteenth century? Were those who aspired to act as moral beings condemned to be either extraneous to the point of being paralyzed like Melville's heroine, partly subservient to others like Ginevra, fertile or sterile, or crushed and without hope like Emma Courtney?

I believe Forthanger Shy can be seen as a response, not only to Melville or Burney, but to Melancthon and Pope as well. What makes this novel so fascinating and so complex is that the view of femininity it presents is opposed not only to a generalized, official patriarchal ideology regarding women, but also to the ideology of the young heroines we have been discussing. The latter, furthermore, is an ideology we can call quasi-official for two reasons. First, because it was generalized and dominant,<sup>47</sup> in the sense that it had become conventional in the novels of Burney's contemporaries. Second, because, in spite of its limited

<sup>47</sup> Mary Kaye, Vol. II, p. 187. *Emphasis in the original.*

<sup>48</sup> I am using the term dominant in a sense analogous to Lacan's conception of dominant discourse as an established language even the opposition must use in attacking the official viewpoint. (see Richard Terrence, Discourse/Counter Discourse [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986], p. 42.)

protest, this ideology of the young novelistic heroine shared with the viewpoints of officialdom a sense of women's moral inferiority to men based on contempt toward the typical moral and psychological structure of young women. Northanger Abbey both undermined the anti-feminism of this quasi-official position and carried the insipient protest of Austen's "sister authors" work further by means of unadvised laughter and a new conception of women's development and growth.

### Samuel in Northanger Abbey

Unlike other satirists, Austen did not resort to disparagement of contemporary works by comparing them to the greatness of a classical past. For one thing, there was no Aeneas, epic celebration of women she could contrast to the image of ethereal, victimized femininity drawn by her "sister novelists." More significantly, Austen chose to undermine the validity of this image by a movement toward dismantling the stature of both the male tyrant and his saintly victim, among other means. This novel returns both authors and readers by a defining transposition from a mythical to a quotidian realm, constructing their fictional identification to the prosaic reality of middle-class society and individuals. If we must describe a struggle between young womanhood and powerful patriarchy, Austen seemed to be saying, we need not look to remote mountainous settings and medieval times and

relationships; a contemporary English village would provide less vivid but more representative examples.

By switching the emphasis to everyday events and situations, the novelish shaped an impulse also shared with Romantic satirists, whose interest lay in current events, trends and topical issues. In "the quest and search directions in the development of everyday life" (PSP, 118), that *Northanger Abbey*, specifically, was meant to reflect what was current and in vogue is shown by the "advertisement by the authoress." This note, appended to the novel in 1818, apologized for "those parts of the work which thirteen years have made comparatively obsolete." It makes clear Austen's original intention to allude to "places, manners, books and opinions," trends and issues that had "undergone considerable changes" since 1795 (PSP, 117).

In keeping with this concern with "fashions and currents" of its time (PSP, 118), this novel translates the struggle between feminine innocence and patriarchal depravity to more modern and contemporary settings and circumstances. Instead of a Roman who leads up the heroine and commands armies of bandits, we have General Tilney, a satirical man who sets a monetary price for every human relationship, bullies everyone, and rudely throws the heroine out because she turns out not to be a great heiress. Instead of being courted by noblemen and assailed by men driven mad by her beauty, our heroine will only receive the oblique hint of a street,



ungrateful and greedy young man who only wants her because he thinks she is rich. Instead of an angelic, brilliant heroine like Emma, Cecilia or Cecilia, we have Catherine Marland, an ordinary young lady, an ignorant and untransformed "as young girls usually are" (22, 14). For Hawthorne, *Melior* not only updates the typical Gothic conflict; it also applies "the kindly and popular corrective of laughter" (228, 21) to the extreme spirituality of contemporary novelistic heroines. Catherine Marland is energetic, even lively, where her predecessors have been languid and listless. Instead of a young lady who must, like Emma Courtney, now draw before society's monstrous rejection toward women, we find in Catherine a robust young woman, more decisive than anyone else in the novel.

Nevertheless, Catherine's strength is as ordinary as her notions are commonplace. In order to understand how Catherine can represent both a celebration of feminine sturdiness and a disavowal of the typical heroine's stature, we need to appreciate the novel's general stance as carnival laughter and the use of specific character types and idiosyncratic language. *Carnival Laughter*

Meliority in Hawthorne's *Melior* has all the essential features of carnival laughter: first, it is "the laughter of all the people"; second, it is "universal in scope"; and third, it is universal in that "it is gay, triumphant, and

at the same time seeking, deciding. It creates and denies, buries and revives" (198, 11-12).

Before proceeding any further, some marginal comments on the phrases "laughter of all the people" and "universal in scope" are in order. It may be, in part, because of a misinterpretation of such terms that Aaron Fogel, comparing Bakhtin's notion of carnival as "dangerous strategies of pressure to speak" to a sense of violent coercion to speak in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, concludes that the scene is "more radical and critical, and less innocent than Bakhtin."<sup>2</sup> The image of the benevolent, naive Bakhtin may also be based on some of the infamy-visions he has received. As Ben Hirschhop observes, for some of Bakhtin's commentators dialogue appears as

the promise of a coherent and peaceful society, in which individual voices are ultimately permitted because they "take into account" each other's opinions. This is a far cry from the condition of flames needed struggle sustained by Bakhtin in "Discourse in the Novel." . . . It is likewise remote from the carnival culture described in the study of Francois Dubetle, which takes its internally dialogical form from its function as an oppositional and subversive culture.<sup>3</sup>

If we understand Bakhtin, with Hirschhop, as far from "a dialogue which both recognizes and defuses difference," we

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<sup>2</sup>Aaron Fogel, "Shared Speech and the Hidden Dialogue Quiesce," *Reckoning Bakhtin: Arguments and Challenges*, ed. Cary Hunt Norton and Cary Hirschhop (Urbana: Illinois Northwestern University Press, 1991), p. 188.

<sup>3</sup>Ben Hirschhop, "A Response to the Form of Mikhail Bakhtin," in *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on His Work*, ed. Cary Hunt Norton (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 74.

must interpret the generalizing terms "all the people" and "universal" as part of the fiction of carnivalesque laughter. The "point of view of the whole world" (208, 12), is a discourse that rises by opposition to the ritual seriousness of official feasts can only be a mask, not an actual unity, a temporary concord achieved by individuals. The "whole world" represents, not a melting of all differences into peaceful cohesion, but a negation of a negation, the working, all-involving contestation to the exclusions of the common people by the solemnity of official rites. This "universal" laughter is still an utterance which, to borrow Susan Stewart's phrase, "stands in tension or conflict with the utterances of others."<sup>27</sup>

In this sense, carnival laughter in *Bartholomew Island*, as before the rejoicing of an anti-heroine, is anti-exclusionary in its celebration of the heroine's ordinariness, her lack of heroic qualities. In the face of all the claims to exceptionalism of the typical novelistic heroine, Catherine Marston stands as a completely unexceptional young woman. In the novel's heroine's ironic words, she uniformly behaves "with a degree of satisfaction and composure, which would rather consist with the common feelings of common life, than with the refined susceptibilities, the tender emotions" of a heroine (*passim*, 12, 13). She is middle-class, not

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<sup>27</sup>Susan Stewart, "Bakhtin's Anti-Disparities," in *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on His Work*, p. 44.

poor, but she belongs to one such severely despised underclass, from an intellectual and moral standpoint: young womanhood. Thus her story is "popular" in the sense in which "common people" is synonymous with "underdog."

This novel's laughter is universal because it is, like festive laughter, "directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants" (198, 11). The most obvious and almost total of the laughter is the heroine herself, whose mind is, we are told from the very beginning, "as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is" (18, 11). Furthermore, not only do we find laughter at the expense of fashionable manners and people and contemporary fiction, but also laughter aimed at him whose many critics have taken to be the novelist's surrogate, Henry Tilney, and at the narrator herself. Again, this posture of self-mockery is not an object individualistic attitude or a posture of naive goodwill. Rather, self-directed laughter is a form of opposition to the ritual self-glorification typical of dominant, hegemonic groups through the proclamation of official truths by the celebration of a national feast. By laughing at themselves, carnival participants are not renouncing power, but denouncing self-worship as a sham.

In this vein, Henry, the hero, appears as a high-spirited young man with a penchant for satire, poking fun at every thing, from typical ballroom conversation and fashionable flirting manners to the Gothic exaggerations of

the novel he admittedly admires. He is much given to parody, when he first meets Catherine he wins her (and the reader's) interest by mimicking the affectations and "dappering air" of smoking "fops" addressing young ladies on a Bath dancing floor (24, 25). He pretends to share commonly held views, in order to ridicule them: in this capacity he plays the role of *clever* (see pp. 274 to 282 below) and he resembles the novel's own narrator. Nevertheless, the narrator can show affinity with her hero and at the same time laugh at him, as indeed she laughs at herself. For instance, while Henry indulges both his penchant for mockery and his passion for linguistic precision he is himself laughed at by his sister: Catherine Morland has used the word "nice" to describe *Editha*. Henry decides this usage of a word which "originally . . . was applied only to . . . business, propriety, delicacy or refinement," but which now is incorrectly used to comprise "every commendation on every subject." To this comment his sister counters that the word nice is its original meaning "ought only to be applied to you, without any commendation at all. You are more nice than wise." She then dismisses his fault-finding remarks as irrelevant:

"Come, Miss Morland, let us leave him to meditate over our faults in the pleasant propriety of dictation, while we pursue *Editha* in whatever train we like best" (24, 28):

By laughing at Henry for being a stickler for precise diction, *Editha* subverts the "propriety" of its own, very well-spoken narrator. This comment is continued in the very

instances where characters' utterances are reported indirectly, for many of these utterances are faulty in logic or syntax or both, and yet they appear embedded in one of the narrator's impeccable sentences. Her correction, however, cannot defeat the veridicality of the characters' utterances.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the critical dispute over whether Henry Tilney must be seen as the narrative spokesman for the author or as a finely fallible young man is deflated when we realize that the author does not reserve for herself the prerogative of infallibility. From the beginning the narrating voice created by Austen refuses to adopt the manner of the authorialities, monologic narrator. Rather than appear to know all, the narrator ironically pretends to be surprised by the "strangeness" of Catherine's "ordinariness" ("What a strange, unaccountable character!" (NA, 14); "This was strange indeed" (NA, 15.)) The customary dignity of the fictional narrator is also undermined in this novel by means of the many instances where she refers ironically to her own performance. In one such reference, "and now may I dismiss my heroine to the sleeping couch, . . . the true heroine's portion . . ."

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<sup>7</sup>Such is the case, for instance, when Catherine asks Marie Thorpe for details about their wedding the day before: "Marie desired no greater pleasure than to speak of it; and Catherine immediately learnt that it had been altogether the most delightful scheme in the world; that nobody could imagine how charming it had been, and that it had been more delightful than any body could conceive" (NA, 114). The narrator's hypocritical style imposes a superficial order on the young lady's paranoiac effusions, but the latter's hyperbolic, repetitive quibbles stand intact.

(84, 98-), the storyteller employs a meta-narrative device, sneaking in giving herself permission to make a narrative decision. Thus, in parodying contemporary fiction she is directing the irony at her own narrating function.

As was to be expected, the reader does NOT suppose having laughed at in the course of the narration. Julie Fawcett Brown has pointed out that the novel satirizes the exaggerated fancy of naive readers who expect the novel to show an unframed world,<sup>12</sup> but the irreverent spirit animating the novel will NOT respect even the reader who can claim some sophistication. Thus the narrator plays games with her audience, unexpectedly introducing, in a suspenseful moment, a teasing statement that changes its apparent meaning as one reads and Catherine Harland explores the abbey on her own, looking for confirmation of her doubts regarding Mrs Tilney's imprisonment: she finally comes to the late Mrs Tilney's room:

The lock yielded to her hand, and, luckily, with no noise arose that could alarm a human being. On tip-toe she entered; the room was hushed but it was some minutes before she could perceive another sleep. She beheld what fixed her to the spot and excited every feeling-- She saw a large, well-proportioned youth-- NOT, as Harland daily had, arranged as unbecomingly with an Amazon's care, a bright dark robe, satiny wadding and neatly-pinked shoes, on which she wore beads of a western sun gently poured through two oval windows! (84, 293--emphasis added).

The underlined statement seems mischievously ambiguous, as though the narrator were playing a joke on the readers:

<sup>12</sup> Julie Fawcett Brown, p. 93.

Catherine is disappointed not due to any extraordinary sighting, but precisely because, having worked herself up to breathless expectation, she sees nothing out of the ordinary, and is shocked by the contrast to her inspirations. But the reader first encountering the statement may interpret it by reference to the horror-story scheme which Catherine is trying to live out, a scheme well-known to most readers. Just as Catherine "expected to have her feelings worked," so, Austen's audience, may have also slipped into such an expectation under the manipulation of the author, who did "work" our feelings.

Laughter in this novel, then, is intentionally aimed at subject spoken of, speaker and audience. The example above also serves to show that its festive attitude complies with the third characteristic of carnival laughter as defined by Bakhtin, by being simultaneously mocking and gay, regenerative. In the words of Paula Frewitt Brown, the purpose of Austen's humor "is corrective, not malicious . . . In all the ironic comedies Austen seems to show how evilhearted can be hostile to humanity and irony friendly to it."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore laugh corrects, or better, regenerates because it liberates us from what Bakhtin called "the great latrine comedy" (198, 94), in the sense that it frees us from the social severity that dissuades young women impatiently as fools. Many people, male and female, have at some point been rebuked with the charge of feminine puerility. Such taunts

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<sup>2</sup>Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 21.



immediately turn into unbecoming fears that threaten to devour our self-esteem, and that in time give rise to defensive urges to throw the accusation at others. This novel, as will become clear when we discuss Catherine's role as Miss Goss and, later, her carnivalesque Bildung, embraces that danger and turns the despised figure of the foolish schoolgirl into a triumphant symbol of renewal.

### Catherine's Carnivalesque

Catherine Marlow is an "ignorant and untrained" girl, but she is not foolish; rather, from childhood, she is a "disorderly" woman<sup>27</sup> she remains in dirt, declines to study, loves mischief, and enjoys physical activity in radical ignorance of current books, which worried girls that can would interpret nonconformity as a symptom of "sexual susceptibility."<sup>28</sup> The sources of this young woman's unbecoming resistance to patriarchy can be found both in the literary

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<sup>27</sup>Patricia Logan Davies offers a fascinating view of women as queens of May festivals and as officers during other occasions of festive rituals in her article, referred to above, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe," in *The Renaissance World*, pp. 144-75.

<sup>28</sup>Catherine's love of exercise and lively spirits would seem to be a response to Mary Wollstonecraft's cry, "In the name of truth and common sense, why should not our women acknowledge that she can take more exercise than men? or, in other words, that she has a sound constitution; and why, in deep domestic vivacity, is she daily told [by Dr. Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Sonnets*] that men will free themselves and she little think of?" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, p. 15).

figure of the fool, and in the ideology of an unlikely group: schoolgirls.

Justen, who had herself been a student at two boarding schools, knew well the jargon and the attitudes of school-girls, which she associated with disruptive laughter. In one of her earliest recorded letters, Justen writes with enthusiasm to the style of Cassandra's correspondence, calling her sister "the finest comic writer of the present age," and commenting, "I could have died of laughter at [Cassandra's letter], as they used to say at school."<sup>19</sup>

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine's newly awakened in childhood "taste" as she grows to young womanhood, determines to keep herself clean and dress in fine clothes whenever possible, and stocks her mind with fashionable literary allusions (98, 18). Catherine's "reading for a diversion," however, is radically altered when she meets Isabella Thorpe. This young lady, a fortune-hunter, shallow, hypocritical character, acts as an overly knowledgeable influence that subverts the lady code of the best novelistic heroine. For, although she continuously applies to her current education a series of novelistic clichés she would like to live up to, she often behaves with the profane revelation of a schoolgirl who has escaped surveillance.

Thus, for example, she speaks with the sacre & lady may show her Knight in a romance, but she is obviously

<sup>19</sup> *Letters*, p. 8.

appreciative of the "advice young men who have been offering us in this half hour," after commenting that "one was a very good looking young man," she invents an excuse to follow them. When Catherine naïvely warns that "perhaps we may overtake the two young men," Isabella replies that she will not "pay them the compliment" of considering this possibility,

and therefore, to show the independence of Miss Thorne, and her resolution of humbling the men, they set off immediately as fast as they could walk in pursuit of the two young men. (SA, 41)

In this pursuit, and in their discussion of their "teacher" in men (SA, 41-42), Isabella and Catherine give evidence of an interest in sexuality both straightforward and conspicuous.

In addition to serving as romantic confidante for Catherine, Isabella introduces her to Gothic fiction, and thus prepares her, as we shall see, for her humiliation or "humouring." As Catherine applies to her experience the fictions of Gothic novels, both her acquisition of greater independence in judgment and her budding represent a reversal of the stereotypical image of her sex, such as the King of Fools and other debased figures of carnival inverted the dominant image of the women people. On the other hand, her naive incomprehension of what is expected of a sentimental heroine and of an ideologically up to date young lady serves to underline the "file of petticoats" (OT, 28, 481) of Isabella's sentimentality. As we shall see, Catherine mortified is, in spite of the inexperience and ignorance to which society condemns her sex, an intelligent and morally alert human

being, she is as is the typical wife open to a young girl in the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, for she tends to be superficially compliant and pliable. Her determination to learn and to do what's right adopts a characteristically feminine bent, for she is open to persuasion and talent, while the novel's hero is her opposite in a tendency to condemn ironically the failings of his fellow beings that often leads him to arrogance. In spite of her initial willingness to yield to the judgment of others, however, Catherine is firm and steady in her beliefs, and more aggressive than her lover.

FOR Catherine does not wait for her young son to woo her, an sentimental prison situation. She is attracted to Henry Tilney before he has ever given her a thought, a circumstance that allows the narrator to laugh at the sentimental convention dictating that the lady must be assiduously courted before she responds.<sup>17</sup> After their first meeting, Henry and Catherine part "on the lady's side, at least, with a strong inclination for continuing the acquaintance":

...while she thought of him as much, while she dried her worn wine and water, and prepared herself for bed, as the dream of his when there, cannot be ascertained: but I hope it was no more than in a slight stammer, as a morning does at noon: for if it be true, as a celebrated writer has maintained, that no young lady can be justified in falling in

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<sup>17</sup>In a note to the Oxford University press edition of *Elizabeth Gaskell, Chaperon* refers the reader to "a letter from Mr. Chapman, No. 57, vol. II, *Remains*" in which this author tells that Catherine does cannot be asked if it springs unbidden.

love before the gentleman's love is destroyed, it must be very improper that a young lady should dress as a gentleman before the gentleman is first known to have dressed as her. (28, 28-29)

When Henry finally "solicits" Catherine's "heart," he cannot truthfully refer to the compromise of expressing anxiety regarding her reply, for both, unlike the narrator, were aware she loved him. Indeed, though he now "truly loved her society, I must confess that . . . a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought" (28, 143).

The narrator's ironical apology for her "wild imagination," suggests such a situation is not at all extraordinary in "common life," where women's sexuality is more active than men's will admit; however, the impropriety of this situation, "dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity," makes Catherine an unwary heroine: her complete ignorance of the need to conceal her affection for the hero indeed appears to be new in romance. Even in *The Idiot*, where Sophie Western loves the title character for weeks before he gives her a thought, she will not "betray herself" until her concern for his safety overcomes her suddenly reticence. Her shame only impresses him when she shows she loves him, which she cannot avoid doing after he rescues her and breaks a long restraining her runaway horse: "His heart now brought forth the full secret, at the same time that it secured him the advantage

object returned his affection."<sup>28</sup> Tom Jones, then, has the double advantage of being spared any anxiety as a lover and of not giving up an atom of masculine supremacy over "the timid sex."

Very different is the case of Catherine Morland's love for Henry Tilney. It is not the heroine's trembling admiration or the hero's exploits that provides the grounds for their attraction. Catherine is instantly attracted to Henry for the assurance of his wit. He notices her because she shows her interest in him, and then finds her naive frankness amusing, her ignorance flattering and her level-headedness refreshing. Their mutual appeal would perhaps not have led to a lasting relationship had not Catherine been so resolute. As she tells him herself, when a misunderstanding arises between them, if she had not been prevented by Mr. Sharpe's villainy, "I would have jumped out and run after you" (p. 14).<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, it is Catherine who actively seeks the Tilneys: she goes to their lodgings to apologise after John Sharpe has tricked her into breaking her engagement to go for a walk with Eleanor and Henry, accidentally meeting Henry in the theater, and openly declares herself "wild" in her desire to marry her

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<sup>28</sup>Tilneying. *Tom Jones*, p. 147.

<sup>29</sup>Images of women running after men are part of the "world upside down motif" in sixteenth to nineteenth century broadsheets, according to David Kunze (cf. "World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type," *The Iconographic World*). Such images appear to have played an ambivalent role, serving to denounce female forwardness and yet having a potentially seductive character.

springing; she later runs down the streets of Bath to break into the Tilneys' drawing room, breathless and unannounced, when John Tilney once more tries to trick her into being rude to Elizabeth and Henry Tilney. Such forwardness may have been disorderly and unduly-like; in one way, however, extraordinary. Catherine was to have been an ordinary young lady who, though she had to suffer under her share of male arrogance and patriarchal contempt, took great advantage of even slightly propitious situations to achieve her goals as best she could.

#### Mad, Clown and Fool

In addition to the revelation of her roles as Catherine actively courts her young man, a prominent use of reversal in this novel occurs in the presentation of both Catherine and Mrs. Allen as wise fools, of Frederick Tilney as rogue, and of Henry Tilney as clown. By these means Austen both indirectly analyses the ways in which the meaning of words depends on the speaker's characteristics and situation and underlines certain conventional and inevitable discrepancies on friendship, love and the spurious femininity of romance.

Clowns and fools, William Shakespeare, have been associated with carnival since the inception of the carnival culture of Rome (198, 4). In the novel, furthermore, the usage of the fool has had various significance:

The salverbe of a rhapsodist who does not understand poetry (or who understands it in a distorted way . . .) is counterpoised to a false pattern, which together with gay deception has the effect of

"looking strange" any pretensions to lofty reality  
 a disclosure of passion might have. (28, 402)

This statement is clearly applicable to Catherine Morland, who, time and again, fails to understand the role she is expected to play as confidante to Isabella Thorpe. The latter wishes to appear as interesting as a novelistic heroine, unfortunately Catherine does not cooperate. Not only does she fail to see through Isabella's machinations; she does not even know the lofty discourses of passion to which Isabella aspires.

The narrator herself slowly but surely undermines Isabella's sentimental discourse, converting an the young ladies' delight in becoming acquainted by producing an aphorism: "Friendship is certainly the finest baize for the purges of disappointed love." (28, 32). "Love" and "Friendship" are hyperbolic terms, for, although Catherine had been feeling disappointment at not seeing Henry Tilney in the Pump-room, she had seen Henry only once before, had known Isabella Thorpe only for a few minutes. Isabella, who is four years older, immediately assumes the lead. Her "decided advantage" over Catherine, however, is confined to knowledge of fashions and an ability to recognize allusions. The narrator pretends to be taken in by Isabella's air of "worldliness": "These powers received due education from Catherine, to whom they were entirely new;" indeed Catherine might have been overwhelmed by them, but Isabella's friendly familiarity "softened down every feeling of awe, and left nothing but tender affection" (28, 32-33). The irony in this characteristic passage professes a novelistic



reason of elevated sentiment by applying it to a ludicrously inappropriate situation.

The amiable Catherine proves to be a very useful companion to Isabella, who has set her sights on marrying Catherine's brother, James Norland. The young man in question is a clergyman, as is Henry Tilney. Soon Catherine confides her hopes of seeing Henry again, and refers to his profession. Isabella replies with a hint incomprehensible to Catherine:

[Isabella] liked [Henry Tilney] better for being a clergyman, "for she must confess herself very partial to the profession;" and something like a sigh escaped her as she said it. Perhaps Catherine was wrong in not demanding the cause of that gentle emotion--but she was not experienced enough in the fineness of love, or the duties of friendship, to know when delicate allusion was properly called for, or when a confidence should be forced. (84, 84)

Time and again, Isabella makes similar jokes on Catherine's fulfilling the "duties of friendship," with similar results. Catherine inevitably fails to understand Isabella's hints, and so she cannot tease her, or make her blush prettily. Thus, Isabella's pretensions to novelistic guile are foiled by Catherine's stupidity, and the code of sentimentality itself is comically exposed. As Nabokov says, what lies at the heart of such incomprehension in a novel is

a political failure to understand anyone else's situation, anyone else's pattern-charged life that has appropriated the words and implies to conceptualize it, a political failure to understand generally accepted, disciplined, inveterately false languages with their lousy labels for things and events. (20, 111)

Isabella Thorpe is a character who seems to need to assign false labels to the events of her life and the emotions they elicit in her. She often uses fictionalizations, casting herself in the self-aggrandizing role of sentimental heroine.<sup>10</sup> In the final chapter as the novel's first volume, for example, having achieved her goal of securing James Morland, Isabella is ready to live out the scheme of full sentimental disclosure. She thus sends for Catherine, and, providing her "warm eye" and consolation, begs her to "repose" herself, as though they were both overcome by emotion. Catherine, however, can only respond "by a look of wondering ignorance." Undaunted, Isabella continues to act as though Catherine had "guessed it the moment you had my note": "My creature!-- Oh! my dear Catherine, you alone who know my heart can judge of my present happiness. Your brother is the most charming of men." When Catherine drives out, "Good heaven my dear Isabella : . . Can you--can you really be in love with James?" Isabella finally reveals she is already engaged to him (38, 137). For three pages Isabella will continue to act out the role of the happy heroine, casting Catherine in the part of the penetrating

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<sup>10</sup>No better description of Isabella Thorpe could be found than Mary Wollstonecraft's statements on the negative results of most female education: "[women] are made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength." "In short, the whole tenor of female education (the education of society) tends to render the best disposed reasonable and prudent and the remainder vain and mean" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp. 81 and 123). Nevertheless, Austen is more optimistic than Wollstonecraft, for if Isabellians are produced by society, so are Catherine's, innocent and naive, yet sturdy and authentic.

friend. Catherine, "reduced of an ignorance so little expected, . . . dared no longer contest the point, nor refuse to have been so full of such penetration and affectionate sympathy as Isabella chose to consider her" (24, 118).

Catherine's effrontery and quirkiness provide the perfect foil for Isabella's hypocrisy; the dialogue between becomes, in Bakhtinian terms, a controversy in which the "jaffy pseudo-intelligence" of conventional politics is unmasked (24, 28, 403). In the present case, the weak tools easily reveal the deepest motive behind Isabella's deception, greed. Isabella, the reader will later find, set out to conquer James' affection because she was deceived as to the extent of his father's wealth. She now fears that his parents will object to her own small fortune. Knowing that her brother's fortune is not vastly different from Isabella's, Catherine attempts to reassure her:

"The difference of fortune can be nothing to signify."

"Oh! my sweet Catherine, in your generous heart I know it would signify nothing; but we must not expect such disinterestedness in Mary." (24, 119)

Isabella then reveals one of her "grand ideas," about loving James even if she "were mistress of the whole world" -- Catherine shares her and is deceived "of all the happiness of her acquaintance." Two of her most common themes of Isabella's "grand ideas" are the strength of her emotional relationships, both as friend and as lover ("My attachments are always excessively strong" --24, 42) and the conviction

of her decisive independence ("I make it a rule never to mind what [men] say: . . . They are the most deceived creatures in the world, and think themselves of no much importance!" --*AK, AK.*) Catherine's unwavering ignorance of the conventional code Isabelle is breaking serves to point up its artificiality. Isabelle's postulated feminism is now mere rhetoric to use in engineering her pose, for Isabelle's first subject is to make males worship her. Men are, therefore, the center of her life, as surely as they would be if she acted submissively toward them. Her "feminism" can be regarded as a pose through which the novelist reveals a flaw at the core of her "misogynist author's" presentations of women characters whose only interest and glory lies in being adored by the hero.

The propensity to employ preconceived notions and labels to hide morally shaky attitudes is a quality Isabelle shares with her brother. John Sharpe is a vulgar young man in the latest fashion of male narcissism. In a conversation with Catherine, John, trying to cash in on what the Sharpes interpret as Isabelle's windfall, drops a succession of impressionist hints in the form of allusions to traditional wedding songs and conventional sayings, hints that Catherine totally misses. Her friendly unsuccess, however, is interpreted as encouragement; the misunderstanding ultimately leads to the outrageous proposition of Isabelle's lecturing Catherine on honesty. In this episode Isabelle, acting as

John's messenger, rebukes Catherine for saying she cannot guess what John's letter to Isabella is about:

"My sweet love, do not be so obviously affected. What can he write about, but yourself? You know he is over Maria and sure he loves with you."

When Catherine shows surprise, Isabella calls her absurd, and remarks,

"Modesty, and all that, is very well in its way, but really a little common honesty is sometimes quite as becoming. I have no idea of being so overstrained! It is fishing for compliments." (II, 144)

In addition to the jarring affectation of such an utterance as "My sweet love, do not be so obviously affected," we observe how Isabella unflinchingly gives herself away. "Modesty," for her, is, like "honesty," a play to be used when it seems "honest" to do so. Catherine, the usual master of the elaborate codes Isabella employs for her deceptions, fails to realize any of this.

Isabella chooses to interpret Catherine's treatment of John as "a little harmless flirtation," ignoring her friend's very valid objections ("You are describing what never happened," says Catherine). Isabella has a reason to take suddenly toward great tolerance of women who give others "more contempt than one wishes to stand by": she has been disappointed in her friend's financial prospects, and she is now flirting with Captain Sillvy, a man who possesses both better looks and more money than James. Assuming, as usual, to generalize, she now applies to the relationship

between Catherine and John arguments that may serve to justify her jilting him, if Elsie were aware:

"[Catherine] would justify as in wishing you to sacrifice all your happiness merely to oblige my brother, because he is my brother, and who perhaps after all, you know, might be just as happy without you, and people seldom know what they would be at, young men especially. They are an amazingly changeable and inconsistent." (22, 144-5)

Evidently, Estrella adapts her beliefs to her needs to a greater degree than do other characters in the novel. The extent to which characters are willing to twist what they consider to be true to fit their convenience may be a dividing line between principled and unprincipled characters in this narrative. And yet the handling of discourse by all characters in this narrative is relativistic enough to justify comparing Hawthorne *Along* to what Estrella called "historic-realistic folk novellas and other low parodies genres associated with Johnsters." This similarity is not, of course, due to any similarities in language or images, but to this novel's "philosophy of discourse." Indeed, in *Hawthorne's Along*, just as in the "novellas" to which Estrella refers, "Every discourse has its own selfish and biased propensities: there are no words with meanings shared by all, no words 'belonging to no one.'" The meaning of words is "determined by the speaker's position (profession, social class, etc. [and, of course, by gender]) and by the concrete situation, the speaker and under what conditions he speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning" (26, 481).

The characters who people *Donkeyman* *again* are comically willing to assign to words those meanings that happen to be most convenient in a given situation. Thus Catherine, for instance, as she anxiously watches the weather one rainy morning, hoping that her projected walk with the Tilneys will not have to be postponed, forgets that she has outgrown her childhood love of dirt,<sup>8</sup> that she has grown "clever as she grew smart" (BA, 109). It is this wish that serves her, when Mr Allen observes that after the rain it will be too dirty for a walk, to answer, "'Oh! that will not signify: I never mind dirt.'" To which her interlocutor "replied very pleasantly, 'I know you never mind dirt'" (BA, 113). At another moment, Catherine, disappointed in her hopes of seeing the returning Mr Tilney again, surveys the crowds of people passing in and out of the Pump-room, "people whom nobody cared about, and nobody wanted to see: [while] he only was almost" (BA, 115). Under different circumstances Catherine would have been

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<sup>8</sup> Allusions to dirt, it has been noted, are part of those "carnivalic signifiers" which "revived us at the need to relieve the clean with the filthy, the rational with the irrational, the ceremonial with the carnivalesque in order to sustain cultural vitality. And they configure the endless potentiality of dirt and the pure possibility of liminality." (Barbara Babcock, "Introduction," in S. A. Babcock, ed., *The Unrepresentable World: Symbolic Invasion in Art and Society*, p. 12. This anthropological perspective, in spite of the many obvious parallels to Bakhtin's, differs substantially from his in orientation, in its emphasis on carnival and ritual collaborating to "maintain cultural vitality," where Bakhtin would emphasize the radical difference between popular and official festivities.

willing to admit that somebody else might care about those people who were not Henry Tilney.

Other characters similarly exhibit discourse that adapts itself to harmless control, equivoquing, for instance, in an interpretation of events that unconsciously flatters them. So does James Morland, who has come to Bath hoping to see Isabelle Thorpe again, when he receives his sister's delighted welcome:

"How! good it is of you to come so far as purpose to see me!"

James accepted this tribute of gratitude, and qualified his acknowledgments for accepting it too, by saying with perfect sincerity, "Indeed, Catherine, I love you dearly." (22, 21)

Nevertheless, there is a profound difference between the discourses of such characters, willing mildly to accommodate truth to their narrow needs, and that handled by such manipulators as Isabelle and John Thorpe or General Tilney, who care not how others will be hurt by their lies. A further difference has to do with their pretense that what they say is an "unmediated," universally applicable, almost eternal truth. While Isabelle invokes sentimental wisdom as dogma, her brother, "a rattle" led by "the excess of vanity," uses exclamation, oaths and outrageous insinuations to bully his interlocutor into accepting his "very idle assertions and impudent falsehoods" (22, 22). General Tilney, on the other hand, appeals to the "timorous" language of gallantry to hide his tyrannical rule over his household and to flatter



Catherine, whom he mistakenly considers heiress to Mr Allan's estate.

In a world where self-interest plays a crucial (though not exclusive) part in determining meaning, Isabelle meets her clichés, affixing to whatever suits her needs her "lusty pathos-charged labels" as though they were axiomatic. To expose her, Rachel creates a character Isabelle would call a "gay deceiver," capable of offering a "verbal and affectional response to the lie of pathos":

Opposed to the lie of pathos . . . there is not straightforward truth (truth of the same kind) but rather a gay and intelligent deception, a lie justified because it is directed precisely to liars. (28, 421)

The "gay deceiver" or "happy rogue" in this novel is Captain Frederick Tilney, who can catch and uncoil Isabelle at her own game. When we see him parrying with Isabelle in the most fashionable language of coquetry (cf. 28, 147), playing the gallant to Isabelle's damsel. His language deftly parodies Isabelle's flirting style, which she already exhibited for us as she strove to secure James Marlowe's attentions. As happy rogue, Frederick "periodically represses" her false pathos, allowing us to apply to him Bakhtin's words, for Frederick handles about this pathos

in such a way as to rob it of its power to harm, "distanc[ing] it from the mouth" as it were, by means of a smile or a deception, mock[ing] its falsity and then turn[ing] what was a lie into gay deception. Falseness is illuminated by ironic consciousness and in the mouth of the happy rogue parodies itself. (28, 422)

free from resulting in any harm, Frederick's actions are ultimately salutary. Initially, Catherine cannot forgive Frederick, since her brother is suffering. But when James finally breaks the engagement, Frederick simply drops Isabella, who then tries to use Catherine to get James back. This situation becomes part of Catherine's educational experience, for Isabella's "shallow artifice" can no longer "lay an axe upon Catherine" (28, 118). Henry must then explain to Catherine that Frederick only pretended to love Isabella "for Isabella's sake." Our heroine must admit that it is a great fortune that James did not marry such a woman. Frederick's actions could be inexcusable in a serious moral discourse; the fact that Henry attempts to justify them is further evidence that Frederick is acting as a "pious," a deliverer of deliverers, and thus as a figure beyond moral judgment. Although Catherine at first resists Henry's logic, attributing it, in relative fashion, to his "standing by his brother," she is "complacently out of further bitterness" by Henry, who simply makes light of the issue. Again, relatively wise the day, for Catherine feels that "Frederick could not be so unpardonably guilty, while Henry made himself so agreeable."

This episode is only one of many where Henry and Catherine are counterposed in that functional "coupling of incomprehension with comprehension, simplicity and salveria with intellect" that Austen considers a "highly typical

phenomenon is novelistic prose" (BA, 481). But our heroine does not only play the role of fool through her inability to understand. She also often acts a positive role, an earlier role to what Nabokov calls the "subducent--even--dominant--image of the 'wise fool'" (PWP, 199). Time after time she weighs "social conventionalities" against her experience, and finds that the latter, honest though it is, will refuse to uphold the former. Her commonsense responses to Henry's hedonistic evidence is inquisitive level-headedness that charms him. For instance, when Henry mentions the cliché regarding "time [spent] so much more rationally in the country" than in Bath, Catherine disagrees; when Henry argues that at Bath she is "in pursuit only of amusement all day long," she replies,

"And so I am at home--only I do not find so much of it. I walk about here, and so I do there--but here I see a variety of people in every street, and there I can only go and call on Mrs. Allen."

Mr. Trimby was very much vexed. "Only go and call on Mrs. Allen!" he repeated, "What a picture of intellectual poverty!" (BA, 75)

Catherine Morland achieves perspicacity through her lack of pretensions. Thus, when Henry remarks somewhat cryptically at her candor and honesty, her unwavering confidence that everyone is as straightforward as herself, she replies,

"I do not understand you."

"Then we are on very unequal terms, for I understand you perfectly well."

"Well--yes; I cannot speak well enough to be understood,"

"Brevet an excellent satire on modern language."  
(SA, 132-3)

As "wise fool," Catherine Merford is a character whose ignorance and inexperience allow her to question conventional "facts," what "everyone knows." The substitution, therefore, is a comic counterpart to Pastorek's "ridiculous man," who, says Nabokov, "is stupid in his knowledge of the truth and . . . is therefore ridiculed by everyone else. . . ." (PMP, 151). In this capacity she delivers herself of some descriptively accurate but actually scathing criticisms of history both as discourse and as ideological record, and incidentally at the prevailing system of instructing small children. Naively marveling that Miss Tilney could like to read history, she confesses it only either annoys her or worries her:

"The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all--it is very tiresome! and yet I often think that it could be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention--the speeches that are put into the heroes' mouths, their thoughts and designs--the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books." (SA, 133)

As a record of the evolution of culture and ideology, of the way human beings live, history is surely deficient, lapses Catherine, since it has traditionally focused almost exclusively on discourse and on power men from the viewpoint of the dominant. As discourse it is not much better, for it strains the credulity of the reader without delighting her imagination. When Miss Tilney, a more mature, more adult young woman, defends history, Catherine again expresses her

wonder that so many people in her acquaintance should like it.<sup>42</sup>

"At this rate I shall not pity the writers of history any longer. If people like to read their books, it is all very well, but to be at as much trouble as killing grass snakes, which, as I used to think, nobody would willingly ever look into, to be labouring only for the harvest of little boys and girls, always struck me as a hard task! and though I know it is all very right and necessary, I have often wondered at the painter's courage that could sit down on purpose to do it." (MS, 100)

Right on cue, Henry Tilley, who is also present, seizes the opportunity to laugh at her for using "to torment" as synonymous of "to instruct." In her reply, Catherine shows once more her unorthodox, far-reaching vision by criticising contemporary methods of instruction that employed history books as early readers:

"You think me foolish to call instruction a torment, but if you had seen me make use of myself to hear your little children first learning their letters and then learning to spell, if you had ever seen how stupid they can be for a while merrily together, and how tired my poor mother is at the end of it, as I am in the habit of seeing almost every day of my life at home, you would allow that to torment and to instruct might sometimes be used as synonymous words." (MS, 100-101)

Her views on education, of course, are at variance with what was then the norm, and they are as likely to be held in

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<sup>42</sup>Again, in this regard Austen may have based her satire on Whitmorecraft's discussion of women, who, says Whitmorecraft, in their ignorance, often slight "as insipid the water dipping and wondrous games of history" (A *Reproduction*, p. 105). Again, however, gone beyond Whitmorecraft's feminism, since Austen suggests that the patriarchal bias of traditional history may also be responsible for forming attitudes for it.

contrast on the view of domestic groups (in this case schoolchildren) usually are. Catherine's critique gives voice to two socially ignored groups of people: women and the young. In this episode, at least, Henry Tilney seems to have the last word: he patronizingly lectures her on the need to teach reading or "Mrs Radcliffe had written in vain" (Catherine is at the moment quite charmed by Mrs Radcliffe's words.) But of course what is at issue here is not whether or not children should learn to read, but *how* they should be taught,<sup>27</sup> and Henry's argument simply sidesteps that issue.

Another character who occasionally acts as a wise fool is the ineffably dull Mrs Allen. No one could see farther from wisdom than this lady, described in very unflattering terms as "one of that numerous class of females" who invite "surprise at there being any man in the world who could like them well enough to marry them. She had neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner." The lady is good-natured and indulgent; her only passion is dress (22, 23).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>It is significant that Mary Shelleycraft, apparently aware of the educational plight of young children, writes a primer for her daughter that probed both the topics and the difficulty of the material through several levels (of "lessons," *Emilia: or, the Art of the Art of a Reading Primer*).

<sup>28</sup>Compare Mrs Allen's "obsession with being nice" to Shelleycraft's disposition of routine domestic with dress: "She order their clothes to be made, and have done with the subject; when make their own clothes. Necessary or ornamental, and are continually talking about them; and their thoughts follow their heads. It is not the making of necessaries that weakens the mind, but the frippery of dress" (*A Reading Primer*, p. 124). Even more obvious is the similarity between the passage on Mrs Allen's preparations for her

The reader will later get a clue as to what Mr Allen could possibly have seen in her. Mrs Allen, it appears, being placidly unconcerned about anything other than her own apparel, was so far from ever contradicting her husband that she generally "thought his expressions quite good enough to be immediately made use of upon by herself" (EA, 117). Her reaction to whatever her husband says, even when it runs counter to opinions she has just expressed, is likely to be, "that is just what I was going to say!" (EA, 188). And yet this tendency to acquiesce in his opinions does not prevent her from holding more liberal and enlightened views than his own, as becomes evident when Mr Allen considers Catherine's outing to Chelsea with the Thorpes as an improper scheme, on the grounds that "it has an odd appearance, if young ladies are frequently driven about (in open carriages) by young men, to whom they are not even related." Mrs Allen immediately reacts, "Yes, my dear, a very odd appearance indeed." However, when Catherine asks "why did you not tell me so before? . . . I always hoped you would tell me, if you thought I was doing wrong," Mrs Allen replies, "And so I should, my

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appearance at Bath, and Multatuli'scraft on feminine travels: "A man, when he undertakes a journey, has in general the air in view; a woman thinks more of the incidental occurrences, the strange things that may occur on the road; the impressions she may make on her fellow-travellers; and above all, she is excessively intent on the mode of the conveyance that she desires with her, which is more than ever a part of herself, when going to figure on a fine scene; when, to use an apt French term of suppression, she is going to produce a sensation" (Kilgushtian, p. 188).

ding . . . But one must not be over particular. Young people will be young people, as your good mother says herself. . . ." (28, 184-85). Mrs Allen thus dismisses the question of impropriety, leading the reader to surmise that the kindly Mr Allen may have been more concerned about his own image as Catherine's temporary guardian than anxious to protect her reputation. Catherine will later find that General Tilney, in his eagerness to promote her intimacy with his son, finds no breach of manners in allowing her to be driven by Henry in an open carriage. Proper conduct for young women, it appears, is often relative to male self-interest.

In addition to the roles of fool and rogue, Scott's provides a composite figure, that of the clown:

Between the rogue [who likes to lie] and the fool [who fails to understand lies] there emerges, as a unique coupling of the two, the image of the clown. He is a rogue who dons the mask of a fool in order to satirize distortions and shufflings of language and ideas, thus unmasking them by not understanding them. (28, 404-5)

Such is frequently Henry's function in the novel. Indeed, during the scene when Henry first appears in the novel he performs his most outrageous clowning, reversing gender roles as he converses with Mrs Allen on the merits of different milks. During this conversation he gravely misreads Mrs Allen's concerns and opinions, making this sternly chastised lady feel "quite awestruck by his goodness" (28, 287). Catherine, who witnesses the scene, begins to fear "that he indulged himself a little too much with the fables of



others"; but she finally yields to his charm, his compliments and witticisms (XX, 34).

Again in his capacity as slave, Henry pretends to ministerpost a hard-core conversation between John Thorpe and Catherine while she dances with Henry as an intermission in his rights: "I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage: Fidelity and compliance are the principal duties of both; and those who do not chuse to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours." In this manner, Henry "distorts" the propriety vice (jealous and reserve, by substituting them as an inappropriate occasion. Catherine, however, cannot see the similarity between marriage and dancing: "People that marry can never part," says she, "but must go and keep house together; People that dance only stand opposite each other in a long room for half an hour." True, quite aware of what is expected of a witty female in such a setting, she exhibits her homely common sense. When Henry continues to make unconvincing analogies, Catherine allows "all this sounds very well," but she cannot bring herself to agree. He then plays the devil's advocate, suggesting what should have been her witty objections to his comparisons, but Catherine will not even cooperate by allowing that he has represented her arguments correctly. Henry ironically declares himself "quite at a loss" to understand what objections she could possibly have to his analogy (XX, 34-5). Henry's closing, in this and

other instances, constitutes a "shuffling of languages and labels" having to do mostly with gender relations and women's social roles. It is ironically significant that one of his most serious arguments opposing marriage to dancing involves the conventional view that "man has the advantage of choice, women only the power of refusal";<sup>11</sup> in this novel, there is no doubt that it is the female who has first made the choice.

It is the ambivalence and "joyful negativity" of Henry's humor that give rise to such widely divergent readings of his role in the novel as those we find, for instance, in A. Walton Litz and Lloyd Brown, on the one hand, and Claudia Johnson on the other. Brown holds that Henry, as "the most penetrating character in the novel," does almost the author's own job: "in effect, [Henry] is the parodist who mimics Catherine's language (words like "lovesick," for example) and intellectual values in order to demonstrate their limitations vis-à-vis the complexities of experience."<sup>12</sup> Litz goes even further, assuming that Austen has given up so much of her authority to this character that she has lost any right to criticize him: "Henry's attitudes merge with those of his creator on so many occasions that we are disturbed when she speaks to us directly, or when Henry is suddenly subjected to her irony,"<sup>13</sup> Johnson, on the other hand, is so impressed by Henry's

<sup>11</sup>Lloyd B. Brown, *ELIZABETHAUSTEN*, p. 174.

<sup>12</sup>A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development*, p. 87.

occasional displays of male arrogance that she portrays him as a flippest, self-serving, smug conversationalist, who often "will with registered complacency lay down the law." As an overbearing brother, Henry is only different from John Thorpe in being less boorish.

[The] cool possession of privilege inhibits [both males] in discovering better, not the less corrosive for being entirely in the women's corner of things. In most occasions, however, Tilney's behavior is more polished, a self-proclaimed expert on matters feminine. . . . Tilney simply believes that he knows women's minds better than they do, and he dismisses any "no" to his contrary as absurd.<sup>47</sup>

Although I do not consider Henry as either the author's unquestionable alter ego or a representative of male oppressors, I believe both sides in the matter of Henry Tilney's worthiness and credibility adduce strong arguments in support of their position. The reason for these two conflicting bodies of evidence can be understood when we see the novel from the additionist perspective of "a radical skepticism toward any unadorned discourse and any straightforward seriousness" (28, 44).

We have seen that Henry cannot escape being laughed at in a novel where laughter is "universal in scope." As a male member of the gentry living in turn-of-century England, Henry is liable to the arrogance that, it is implied, will color the viewpoint of even the most well-lighted man. Such is the omission we draw from the narrative of a fascinating

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<sup>47</sup>Virginia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, p. 37.

conversations among Henry, Eleanor Tilney and Catherine during their walk round Beaches Cliff. In this occasion we see Henry and Catherine advancing in their mutual education, and Henry mentioned as worthy of being her lover both through the narrator's and his sister's authority, though in terms that strongly contrast with those habitual in sentimental novels. Her free being alluded to as one *delicate*, the here and "workshop of sales," in Charlotte Smith's *Rasselas*. Henry is referred to very unsexually. The narrator's looking tone seems to seem incompatible with her use of Henry as the "intelligent" pole in his dialogues with Catherine, next as the "completion," when we place the narrator's discourse in the context of the novel's relativism and its polemic intention.

Her hero is mentioned as Catherine's lover after she expresses shame for her ignorance of drawing, an avocation for both Henry and Eleanor, and at the demise of the picturesque. The two Tilneys, however, will not think less of her, observes the narrator ironically: the narrator's remarks about the vanity of people in general then lead to highly-charged comments on her's villanous painted women:

Where people wish to attract, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind, is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman, especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Austen is here probably parodying Dr. Gregory's advice to his daughter: "that if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the man, who

The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by the capital part of a sister subordinated to her treatment as the subject. I will only add in justice to her, that though in the larger and more trifling part of the case, inferiority in reason is a great enhancement of their personal merits, there is a portion of this too susceptible and too well informed themselves to desire any thing more in reason than ignorance. (SA, 120-2)

The passage by "a sister author" alluded to here is an allusion by Mrs. Arberry in Henry Barry's *Cailla* we already quoted above (see p. 187). The narrator ironically implies that the highest form of enlightenment we can expect in men is their being satisfied with female ignorance rather outright inferiority. She also chooses Henry among the enlightened few, since he "became perfectly satisfied of [Catherine's] having a great deal of natural taste". . . but only after she "began to see beauty in everything advised by him."

A moment later during the same outing, Henry acknowledges the misunderstanding between Catherine and his sister, when the latter interjects the former's remarks about a forthcoming horror novel he gave about an upcoming London riot. The confusion is caused by Catherine's tendency to speak of fiction as though it were fact, to dwell in a world highly colored by authors common in the sentimental and gothic novels

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generally look with a jealous and envious eye on a woman of good parts, and a cultivated understanding." This passage is quoted by Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; the author continues, "If men do feel so, as [Wollstonecraft] afterwards observes, are superior to this weakness, there is the necessity that the behavior of the whole sex should be regulated to please some..." (p. 179).

she has been reading. This and other similar episodes, I will argue, can be best understood if we see Henry acting as clown "who has the right to speak in otherwise unacceptable languages and the right to maliciously distort languages that are acceptable" (26, 487). On this occasion, Henry distorts the language of male contempt for females by addressing his feminine interlocutors with utterance abusive of women that may be more common among men alone, or when men ironically disavow it. Our here intention is to clarify the misapprehending between Catherine and his sister as an ironically condescending tone, proceeding to have

"be patient with each of my men as disdain to let themselves continue down to the comprehension of yours. Perhaps the abilities of women are neither sound nor swift--neither vigorous nor keen. Perhaps they may want observation, discernment, judgment, fire, genius and wit." (26, 112)

Such blatant presumptuousness can be seen as a heavy pose, an instance of hyperbolic self-pride showing Henry's awareness of the ludicrous presumption of superiority that often characterizes the language used by men to instruct the female audience. Being apparently in the mood for high comedy, he proceeds to explain their mutual error, begging Catherine to forgive Eleanor's stupidity. Eleanor's apprehension that her other brother, Captain Frederick Tilney, could be endangered by action to quell the rebellion, have added "the fears of the sister" to "the weakness of the woman: for she is by no means a compleat in general" (26, 112).

As many critics have pointed out, the details Henry uses to refer to the riot Florence must have been imagining are drawn from recent political events; and yet, since these critics interpret Henry's deception of his sister (and of women in general) literally, they do not see in Henry's allusions to real political events his awareness that Florence's fears are plausible, and not a mark of the simulation. Henry, they hold, undercuts his own argument when he laughs at his sister for fearing what is quite likely to happen.<sup>27</sup> But why would Henry do this? Must we conclude he is a comedian himself? On the contrary, Henry is not expecting to be taken literally when he accuses his sister of weakness and excessive sensibility: Florence, who knows him better than anyone else, immediately interprets his words as a jest. First, she dismisses his disparagement of women in general without showing the slightest offense by turning to Catherine, "[Miss Norland, do not mind what he says--but have the goodness to satisfy us as to this dreadful riot]" (III, 112). Then, when Henry explains that Catherine has not been speaking of a riot but of a new publication, when he apparently insults his sister, Florence's reaction is very different from Catherine's. The latter apparently believes he is serious, for she "looked grave," while Florence only seems worried that Catherine will not understand she is afraid that "[Miss Norland will] think you intolerantly rude to your sister, and

<sup>27</sup>See, for instance, Lita, *Jane Austen*, p. 64.

a great brute in your opinion of women in general. Miss Marlow is not used to your odd ways" (34, 1119).

Are we, indeed, to think Henry a great misogynous brute? Nothing in his actions and speeches in other episodes justifies such a conclusion. The best alternative is to follow ELIZABETH's lead in interpreting Henry's remarks as clowning. For Elizabeth knows that her brother does "think very highly of the understanding of women," although when she tries to get him to acknowledge it before Catherine Marlow he persists in sporting the anti-feminist drive as a parodying:

"Miss Marlow, no one can think more highly of the understanding of women than I do. In my opinion, nature has given them so much, that they never find it necessary to use more than half." (34, 1120)

"We shall get nothing more serious from him now, Miss Marlow. He is not in a proper mood. But I do assure you that he must be entirely misunderstood, if he can ever appear to say an unjust thing of any woman of all, or an unkind one of us." (34, 1121)

It was no effort to Catherine to believe that Henry Tilney would never be wrong. His manner might sometimes surprise, but his meaning must always be just--and what she did not understand, she was almost as ready to share, as what she did. (34, 1122)

That is Henry isolated and sanctified as Catherine's romantic interest, in spite of the fact that she cannot fully understand his "odd ways," his role as clown.

It may be argued that Miss Tilney and Miss Marlow are both too indulgent, that Henry enjoys his jest a bit too much. However, Elizabeth's knowing her brother, and Catherine's faith that this marvelous man must be in the right, are themselves



inevitably presented by the narrative if men's folly leads them to misogyny, she seems to be saying, women's excessive mildness may hide their assumptions of their own oppression. After all, Catherine's tendency to equanimity in male opinion has already been the butt of irony during that marriage ride in which we are introduced to John Thorpe:

[John Thorpe's] discourse now came from its hitherto limited sphere, to nothing more than a short decisive sentence of praise or condemnation on the face of every voice they met and Catherine, after listening and agreeing as long as she could, with all the civility and deference of the possible female mind, fearful of hazarding an opinion of its own in opposition to that of a self-assured man, especially when the beauty of her own sex is concerned, ventured at length to vary the subject. (83, 14)

In contrast to the typical sentimental novel, where the heroine is a victim and certain male figures embody evil power, while the hero can do no wrong, *Northanger Abbey* ridicules misogynous discourses and laughs at the heroine's general subservience before males and her specific admiration for the hero. Catherine's fear of challenging any male opinion is utterly ludicrous when the male is John Thorpe; when it is Henry Tilney's utterances that are in question, her need to be wary seems less evident. And yet Catherine's development will lead her to recognize that Henry, also, can be wrong.

### Emancipatory\_Mildness

*Northanger Abbey* is the story of Catherine's growth from her original docility to a higher level of independence. As

we shall see, however, her coming of age does not follow the serious process of mastering her difficulties that is characteristic of male novelistic Bildung. Rather, through a series of meetings and misunderstandings, Catherine is led to narrative stasis, which can be seen as essential to her needs only from the peculiar perspective of carnival laughter.

This novel traces her development through the process of courtship: the reason why the lovers are attracted to each other is related to their growth. In other words, we can throw light on the basis for their attraction by analyzing what it is they need to learn, and viceversa. What pulls Catherine and Henry together is their common delight in pitting conventional ideas from different sources against evidence drawn from their own experience: each needs to learn how far to rely on certain available ideologies in order to assess people, events, circumstances. Both processes, furthermore, are motivated by carnivalesque logic, by the gay relativism that challenges the absolutism of prevailing truths and authorities. As a female of nearly school age, Catherine Harland remains outside most spheres of power: as the son of a tyrannical and greedy father, Henry Tilney finds his affective life played on in ways he cannot control. These circumstances pit them, in essence, against certain official ideologies, which are in turn challenged that this novel can be said to be governed by carnivalesque logic. The peculiar logic of the "inside out" (G. Lianuzzi), of the "turnabout," of a continual

shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous pirouettes and transients, bacillations, proflutations, comic arpeggios and unarpeggios" (HWS, 11).

From the beginning, Catherine's story is one of confrontation with ideologies, many of which are new to her. When there are no significant practical consequences involved, she can often dismiss an ideological "truth" as incompatible with her own experience. But *Herikanger Abbey* does not oppose a ready-made ideology to the conventional wisdom it often challenges, nor does it exhibit a naive heroine capable of opposing official error. Rather, the reader is never allowed to forget that she is an adolescent schoolgirl, and that her placement in the position of heroine is itself a form of surveillance.

In this sense, Catherine can be seen as a figure of the "removed king," instituting a radically different approach to power and truth. The carnival king, or king of fools, or Lord of Misrule, does not simply substitute a member of the under-privileged classes for the official, traditional ruler, nor does it merely raise a new anti-*dogma* in place of the old official creed. In carnival's "living sense of the world," the crowning of a mock-king is neither "absolute negation and destruction" of an old order, nor absolute affirmation of an alternative one; both absences are alien to carnival. As the festival of renewal, carnival desires a king in order to destroy it:

Growing/decreasing is a dialectic ambivalent ritual, representing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift-and-reveal, the logical rationalizing of all structures and order of all existence and all (dis)order(s); position. Growing already contains the idea of (constant) decreasing. It is ambivalent from the very start . . . --from the very beginning, a decreasing glimmers through the growing. (Pö, 114-5)

Catherine's learning presents this dialectic, two-faced character. She is crowned the central character, but she is humbled repeatedly. As both Catherine will find her old assumptions severely shaken, so much so that even the ways in which she has been accustomed to look at landscapes are challenged. It appears she must even release how to see, and how to talk about what she sees; as she listens to Henry and Eleanor Flinck discuss the prospect from Beecher Hill as an object for a drawing, she finds she cannot even understand their language:

The little which she could understand, however, appeared to contradict the very few notions she had entertained on the matter before. It seemed as if a good view were no longer to be taken from the top of so high hill, and that a clear line sky was no longer a proof of a fine day. She was heartily ashamed of her ignorance. (Pö, 116)

It is characteristic of this novel that we are not then presented by the narrator with the "right" way of seeing the landscape. Rather, Catherine's old-fashioned notions are simply and steadily stated, so that Henry and Eleanor's newfangled lines of "the picturesque" seem to deserve as much irony or gentle mockery as Catherine's old-fashioned views. The

passage, then, is infused with "joyful relativism," with the attitude that believing often shapes seeing.

As we have seen, Henry Tilney will only like Catherine better for her ignorance. He will often derisively counter some of her ideas, such as the notion that men do not like novels: "The parson, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be insensibly stupid," explains Henry (186, 186). Under his tutelage, and faced with Isabella's example, she will begin to question her received views about love, including the adage that, "A woman in love with one man cannot flirt with another," to which Henry replies, "It is probable that she will neither love as well, nor flirt as well, as she might do either singly. The gentleman must each give up a little" (186, 186). But by far the greatest revolution Catherine's thinking must undergo is related to her awareness of evil, the realization that quite ordinary people might harbor rather reprehensible motives. This realization, in turn, is related to her daring to question patriarchal authority.

This somatic process in Catherine's personal development is facilitated by her reading novels herself, to which Isabella introduces her. Influenced by these readings, and by Henry's parody of a Gothic episode,<sup>20</sup> she views

<sup>20</sup>Though Henry's remarks on novels, Austen seems to be having her satire on ideas, if not taken from *Wollstonecraft*, at least compatible with her. In the passages where he parodies sentimental and Gothic fictions, Henry Tilney appears to be using "ridicule," the method *Wollstonecraft* recommended

Northanger Abbey as a place such as "you read about." Nevertheless, her three budding attempts to "read" the old abbey as a novelistic setting must not be regarded, following the critical commonplace, only as unfortunate mistakes. Just as at Maiden Hill she finds she must learn to see anew, at Northanger Abbey she finds she must learn, through her ludicrous attempts to uncover buried secrets, how far she can trust appearances of respectability. She is taught, it is true, by the sheer rage of novelistic "extraordinariness": in time she will learn that seemingly upstanding citizens can be suspect, but not of unusual or extraordinary crimes. Nevertheless, in hunting for old secrets, under the influence of her Gothic reading, Catherine is taking crucial steps towards independence by making bold to question Emma's, to test the validity of the "unofficially serious" male authority she has been trained to respect. She has also been preparing for her suspicions of General Tilney as a murderer or his wife's jailer through her own observations.

The first time she spends some time with the Tilneys is the General's company Catherine is puzzled by the fact that, in spite of his "great civilities to her . . . it had been a relief to get away from him." At this point, however, she

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in order "to correct a fondness for novels" in young women; she also cautions pointing out "by tone and apt comparisons" the discrepancy between reality and "romantic accidents" (*Classification*, p. 187). Nevertheless, Austen, through Henry's defense of novels, defends her own nation.

cannot yet give up the impression that, being "tall and handsome and Henry's father," the General "could not be responsible for his children's want of opinion, or for her want of enjoyment in his company" (84, 187). As the General's guest at the abbey, however, she begins to realize that for all his courtly civilities Henry's father often insists on satisfying his slightest whim. His treatment of Catherine is especially tyrannical. When Catherine encounters evidence of the General's disregard for his daughter's feelings, his egotism, his hypocrisy, his apparent indifference to his late wife's memory, "what had been terror and dislike before" becomes "absolute aversion." This new feeling has the advantage of allowing her to rebel against two patriarchys under whose roof Catherine has lived, for in believing the General to have been odious to his wife Catherine finds reason to prove Mr Allen wrong: "She had often read of such characters [as General Tilney]: characters, which Mr Allen had been used to call monstrous and monstrous; but here was proof positive to the contrary" (84, 181). Her reading Gothic novels, then, becomes a form of crossing by which she has acquired a new, univocal authority. Her new ability to suspect, to doubt the positions of her old authority figures, is for the "well-read Catherine" a "two-edged" point of judgment. "Here it shows her independence but leads her to a kind of reverse authoritarianism, a naive belief that she has now "proof positive" of her reprehensible class. Having decided

that the Federal is no wiser as a half-breed villain, Catherine begins to doubt his every word. His "magnificent compliments" can no longer impose on her: "There must be some deeper cause" even for his seemingly trifling actions than he is willing to admit (82, 187). Catherine decides Mrs Tilney must have been either killed by her husband or imprisoned by him while a false Federal took place. These gruesome suspicions will prove fortunate from the viewpoint of Catherine's friend, for she will become less trusting and phobic, and come to rely less on the benevolence of male authority figures.

Her challenge to patriarchal authority takes the form of a foot-finding tour of Mrs Tilney's apartment which, as we have seen, ends in failure. Her challenge is then in turn challenged by Henry, who discovers her as she stinks around a passage, and soon gets her to acknowledge the reason. He reacts with shock.

"If I understood you rightly, you had formed a suspicion of much horror as I have hardly words to - [hear Miss Norland, catches the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained, . . . - Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. . . . Could [such atrocities] be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this . . . where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of neighbours eyes, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open? Dearest Miss Norland, what ideas have you been entertaining?" (82, 187-8)

This speech at first sight seems to resolutely affirm English superiority and respectability. And yet it has been often interpreted as a shrewd reflection on what we could call the



polishing function of neighbors, those "voluntary spies," as the real source of English virtue. Even after this qualification, however, it is probably true that, as Julia Fawcett Stone suggests, "It is Henry Tilney's national pride, not his family pride, that is offended by Catherine's suspicions."<sup>21</sup> But his speech also contains inadvertent contradictions. If Catherine's "accusation" is "of such horror" that it fragments the quite Henry's sentences, it seems he is too little disposed to reflect on his own admission that the "dreadful" act is impossible, not because it is horrible, but because the neighbors' voluntary surveillance would prevent it.

If after the episode of the cabinet Catherine had felt "battered to the dust" when the supposed manuscript turned out to be an inventory of linen, a handful of washing-bills (RA, 172-3), her feelings of shame are now most acute. Having suffered what Elizabeth would call a "comely uncovering," her remorse takes the form of hysterical self-shame, and for one day "she hated herself more than she could express." She has now learned that in spite of those "charming works" of Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators, at least "in the midland counties of England," people and their habits showed "a general though unequal mixture of good and bad" (RA, 189-200).

Though most critics consider this episode an digression, Catherine must yet undergo the most important phase of her

<sup>21</sup> *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 81.

growth. What she has learned is important, but she is in danger of admiring Henry's "astounding generosity and readiness of comfort" a bit too much, when he so generously endeavors to make her feel comfortable again (BA, 301). And she has yet to learn to discern between what people say about themselves and what they are. As "the annals of common life ... succeed to the stories of romance," Catherine soon find that even people she thinks she knows tell her the about important things. She soon first discover that Isabelle loves neither James Harland nor Frederick Tilney, and finally that the General, though not a scoundrel, is every bit as bad as she had thought him, and, in spite of his frequent protestations to the contrary, very much interested in money.

Catherine has greatly advanced in her development from the time when she dared not doubt John Thorpe's judgment; she can now suppose Henry and Eleanor must be mistaken when they think General Tilney will object to Isabelle's marrying Frederick Tilney because she is penniless. Having once been misled for suspecting the General's character, Catherine now trusts his word; therefore, remembering his frequent "most generous and disinterested sentiments on the subject of money," she concludes that "his disposition is such settled [was] misdeceived by his children" (BA, 300). However, she will soon realize the General will profess not to wish to give trouble to his son during the visit to Woodston, Henry's parents, when actually he expects to be treated most

hardness. This inconsistency will thoroughly puzzle Catherine: "why he should say one thing so positively and mean another all the while was most unaccountable! How were people, at that rate, to be understood?" (SA, 211).

The General has proposed this visit solely for Catherine's entertainment. While they are there, he treats her as Marston's future mistress, addressing so many compliments and hints to her that she is overpowered and silenced. (This, in fact, is so often the result of General Tilney's gallantry that the reader begins to suspect that such overkillness may often be aimed at producing decisive embarrassment and silence.) His pointed civility is suddenly at an end when he discovers that the reports of Catherine Morland's fortune had been false. The contrast between his former complaisance and the wrath he now feels is severe. As a result, Catherine suffers the direct unerring the novel contains, when she is precipitantly ordered to leave Northanger Abbey in a few hours, without even being allowed time to inform her family or provided with a servant to accompany her.

Nevertheless, Catherine's uprooting is not the last one to be found in the novel. Henry Tilney must undergo the humiliating experience of accepting that he has been partly wrong in his self-righteous preaching to Catherine, and the even more humbling one of discovering to what lengths his father's greed and selfishness will lead him. Such an unexpected discovery must be particularly painful to a young

man who had so much awareness in his own good judgment, who had so blithely placed judgment on everyone. Ironically, Henry Tilney, for all his young-man arrogance,<sup>42</sup> has been raised by Catherine and obedient to his father's wishes until the latter's patriarchal dominance finally becomes intolerable. And yet, though his pain in "having such things to relate of his father" to Catherine makes him "pitiable," the result is salutary, since it finally makes him reveal. Although the General has demanded military obedience of everyone, though he has been "accustomed on every ordinary occasion to give the law in his family," this time "too aged, though it must shock, could not intimidate Henry" (88, 137).

Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney, therefore, both come of age at the same time and in similar ways. Her personal growth takes the form of a final, now fully justified challenge to patriarchal authority. She feels, when Henry reveals the General's motives in turning her from his house, "that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had actually aimed against his character as signified his sanity" (88, 147). Once more, the ironic tone of this statement makes it carnivalesque and subversive, for it laughs at the hyperbolic tones in which her

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<sup>42</sup>Henry was boasting of his superior knowledge, when he told Catherine that he "had attended six [sic] studies at Oxford, while you were a good little girl working your sampler at home" (88, 127).

anger is expressed, while at the same time it supports her right to be very angry.

In contrast to the General's character, Catherine's honesty and ability to love make her seem very admirable. Nevertheless, she is not portrayed as as angelic as to be her lover's superior, as Fanny Burney's Cecilia, for instance, had been. In the handling of Henry's pride we do not find Catherine's dignity rising until she treats above him. Catherine upends "all hierarchical precedence": with regard to gender relations, at least, *Northanger Abbey* installs a new, feminist utopia, "a special time of free and familiar contact" in which oppressive patriarchal barriers are dissolved and the two genders appear "as to speak, reform for new, purely human existences" (SFW, 141).

The installation of this new utopia is also reflected through narrative technique. In under four short pages, the narrator then proceeds to remove all obstacles to a satisfactory conclusion, providing the best possible end for every sympathetically portrayed character. Furthermore, the narrator openly and freely refers to this adjustment of narrative circumstances to fit human desires of perfect justice, as the narrating voice hints that such utopian aspirations are part of novelistic convention. Therefore we are told that Catherine's parents' decision not to question her engagement until the General ascends to the carriage will not frighten the readers, "who will see in the full-blown expression of the

pages that we are all bestowing together to perfect fidelity" (22, 100). The number of pages left in a volume, then, is itself capable of conveying meaning to a reader. This ironic pointing to the mechanisms that should only unconsciously operate on the reader's comprehension constitutes a carnivalesque invasion of the customary masking of fictional conventions. Far from hiding such conventions, Barthelme *living* displays the backstage work that goes into the narration. In this sense, this novel achieves, through opposite means, much the same effect of what Nabokov calls the "removal of Dostoevsky" in a well-worn French dress where fantastic elements were "interwoven with the many features of real life" (222, 107).

Similarly, the novel's final chapter returns to the playful hints at the fictional character of the story that were embedded in its initial statement. "We are who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine." By means of this ambiguous reference to her birth, the opening condenses the customary fictional pretense that the protagonist was born and lived an actual life with the admission that she was born to be a heroine, i.e., as a fictional creation of the author. The ambiguous "we is" character of all fictional narrative is thus revealed and brought to the fore.

In the novel's conclusion we find a similar meta-narrative or self-referential phenomenon in the allusion to

"the rules of composition" for novels. This reference occurs in the passage relating how the obstacle to the protagonists' marriage was removed when the General, in a moment of expansion caused by Elanor's marriage to a peer, gives Henry permission "to be a fool if he liked her" (liberary rules, within the narrative, "would the introduction of a character not connected with my father"; she then mockingly justifies herself by revealing that this peer "was the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing-bills, resulting from a long visit at Northanger, by which my heroine was involved in one of her most alarming adventures" (24, 211).

Finally, the utopian character of the ending allows the narrator to ironically stress the novel's subversive tendency. Since every conflict is so happily resolved, and since the General's cruelty and "unjust interference" leads to the characters' beginning "perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen," the narrator finds a perfect occasion to end on a carnivalesque note. Therefore, she leaves "it to be settled by whosoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience" (24, 212).

#### Conclusion

One of the characteristics of utopia as a genre is its implicit disparagement of actual conditions. The utopian

delusion that real-life conditions are not as good as Virginia describes. This conclusion is clearly warranted by this novel's unhappy ending: the narrator has throughout the narrative given too much evidence of her wary skepticism to allow us to take seriously her assurance that all deserving characters will attain to "perfect felicity." Paradoxically, however, *Northanger Abbey*'s comic-satirical stance at the same time presents a more affirmative, more positive view of society. For this is a novel written against the idea that women are best seen as victims, that they are inevitably reinforced by a sexist culture, that their development is inevitably thwarted and their moral and intellectual capacities instinctively stunted in patriarchy. While obviously Catherine is the product of a sexist culture where women are kept ignorant and subservient to men, she is not a submissive victim. Without being extraordinary or tragic, our heroine often acts as an unconscious subversive. She wants to do what is right, and she thinks of herself as dutiful, and yet she keeps the nerve of contact for young ladies only in what is inconsequential. In what is crucial, she disobeys without ever being aware of it, for she not only has sexual feelings but acts upon them, taking the initiative and naively courting her young man. Although a member of a subordinate group, her consciousness determination to pursue her happiness allows her to confront the most powerful patriarchy in her world and ultimately win.



This novel then qualifies one aspect of ideology regarding women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to both Millstonecraft and Kaye, men enjoy all the comparative moral and intellectual advantages, being defamed by society only in their sexual habits. Early feminists typically decried male presumptions of superiority as cruelly inferior to women, not as masculine defect. In *Northanger Abbey*, on the contrary, both males and females show signs of cultural deformation. While, typically, women are kept ignorant and trained for compliance, men harbor rationally inflated ideas of their own worth and judgment. In a sexist, patriarchal society, men can rarely achieve the humility that will contribute to a rational moral posture. Women's images, implies Austen, are very limited, and they should admit it to themselves in order not to harm themselves and others. Men, however, are often led by their privileged position to an arrogant attitude, at least toward women. All culture forms and deforms in a society where there is gender-subordination; both sexes will exhibit deformities.

By carnivalesque means, however, such deformities are rationally tested. *Northanger Abbey* transforms the official ideology and representation, re-forms, the institutions of love and marriage, making them accessible to both men and women. Thus, while Catherine at first believes Henry nearly infallible, she learns the limitations of his views and reinforces her faith in her own perceptions when she suffers

from his father's very real shortcomings. Since the happy ending of the final chapter dissolves our young couple to a life of financial "independence and comfort," we can see that the conditions of carnivalesque utopia are met. Thus Henry and Catherine are transported to their no-place (so unlike the culture the novel has been portraying), where not only are values wrong, but their husbands will stand by them and leave with them. Their happiness will be perfect and enduring. When they marry, Henry and Catherine enter a relationship sealed like that "utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance" (MW, 11) which, according to Bakhtin, characterized the world of festive traditions, the world of carnivale.

CHAPTER 4  
"PRIDE AND PREJUDICE":  
ILLUSTRATED, OR NOT?

Jane Austen's most widely known novel, probably the best loved of her works, is also one of the most carnivalesque, although in a very different vein from Northanger Abbey. In the carnivalesque images and philosophy of Pride and Prejudice we encounter a more complex, more deeply ambivalent attitude. Thus, for instance, while carnivalesque parody is more explicit in Northanger Abbey than in Pride and Prejudice, there is in the latter both a greater emphasis on misalliances, and fools that appear more absurd and grotesque than those found in the latter. Theoretically, while Northanger Abbey concentrated on the problem of women's education and moral choices, Pride and Prejudice makes the social context for this issue more explicit, directing the reader's attention to the concept of community and interpersonal bonds. Therefore, there is much greater insistence on the theme of social intercourse and time as heavy war. In addition, while in more complex, less serene, in the ending of Pride and Prejudice, and yet it is presented from the inception of its fictional world.

Since these differences in narrative scope distinguish between the two novels, it is not surprising that Elizabeth Bennet's development should diverge deeply from Catherine Morland's. (Of course, this divergence is also to be expected because Elizabeth Bennet, without being in any sense idealized as heroine, is a remarkably intelligent young woman, and older than Catherine.) Elizabeth's growth is marked by an awakening readers share, rather than by one we witness, as was the case in Catherine's development. The reader tends to identify with Elizabeth's process because the narrative in Pride and Prejudice adopts a voice that is much closer to the heroine's consciousness than the one used by Northanger Abbey's narrator.

Many of these elements appear already, at least in germ, in the novel's first chapter. A closer reading of this chapter will provide a good avenue into the two interrelated issues of narrative and Bildungsroman in Pride and Prejudice, as well as into the common ground between them, the novel's conception of community.

### The Town, the Village, and the Neighborhood

The chapter holds, of course, one of the most famous opening sentences in English literature: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (PB, 1). As remarked earlier (see Chapter 1, pp. 42-44), this statement

ironically combines the viewpoint of father-hating parents of marriageable women and the language of the prototypical educated mind of Austen's time. It also constitutes a parody of such language, as it was often found in learned treatises by such authors as Dryden or Berkeley, in whose works the prevalence of an opinion was sometimes invoked as its proof.

In this case, since the narrative serves as introduction to a dialogue between Mr and Mrs Bennet, we are led to see it as superimposing their viewpoints; Mr Bennet would appear as representative of the educated individual, while Mrs Bennet would embody the attitudes of the "neighbourhood's surrounding families." In the minds of these families, the narrator continues to say, the "truth" contained in the opening sentence "is as well fixed" that any rich bachelor appears as "the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters." Mr Bennet, on the other hand, seems to consider such an attitude absurd. Thus, when his wife says that she is "thinking of [Bingley's] marrying one of [her daughters]" (although she has not yet met the man), he ironically replies "Is that his design in settling here?"

Indeed, the entire chapter is a verbal battle between these spouses, with Mr Bennet repeatedly pretending to ignore social conventions and Mrs Bennet insisting on his adhering to them. Mrs Bennet tries to convince her husband that he must visit Mr Bingley, the rich, single newcomer to the neighbourhood, since convention dictates that the head of the

household must pay his respects to new neighbors. When cannot initiate social relationships? Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him, if you do not." Mr Bennett's reply is that of the clown who, pretending not to understand conventions, winks at them (cf. *ib.* 428-9): "You are overscrupulous surely. I dare say Mr Singley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chooses of the girls" (*ib.* 5). The lady, therefore, seems to act as the champion of society's codes, while the gentleman winks at them, avowing openly that the business of getting daughters married is a goal underlying many social moves. And yet Mr Bennett, for all his show of eccentricity, will visit Singley: this attitude as in keeping with the figure of the clown, who will distort and expose "artificial" social languages without individualistically opposing them. As we shall see, Mr Bennett's character is ambivalent, since he both acts as an eccentric individualist and performs the role of clown, whose witlessness serves the reader as signals pointing to the need to examine, to reflect upon, certain social codes and languages.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mr Bennett's ambivalent individualistic opposition to conventions at times seems to place him beyond social languages eccentricity and outside the clown's opposition. Individualism is foreign to the clown's ambivalent stance, his fine tuning to social languages. As Bakhtin says, the "clown's speech [is] determined by his specific social orientation [by his privileges as a clown]" (*ib.*, 475). The clown's unique "right to speak in otherwise unacceptable languages" is itself grounded in the clown's social role. This role was to act as

The social language employed here, then, is that of conventionalized, accepted customs within the marriage market forcing women to parade themselves before males (as Miss Bingley will later do before Darcy--cf. PP, 54) in the hopes that one man will "choose" them. The concern with money's significance is also evident in this chapter in Mr Bennett's economic comments about his daughters, who, he says, "are all silly and ignorant like other girls," although he notes the very notable vein regarding Lizzy that she "has some-thing more of quickness than her sisters" (PP, 50). Elizabeth (Lizzy to her parents) will later be shown to possess an intelligent wit Darcy and her father can watch Mr Bennett's comment seems to be another distortion aimed at exposing both anti-feminist prejudice about women's mental powers and a social education that often tended to produce the giddiness and rapidity of a Lizzy and a Lydia.

The entire dialogue in this chapter, furthermore, exposes the fierce competition among families striving to "get their daughters married," a competition going on each year through shows of neighborly friendliness and solidarity. Thus Mrs Bennett fears that Sir William and Lady Lucas will seek to

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the herald of "laughing truth," not in "a subjective, individual ... consciousness" but as "the social consciousness of all the people." While this ancient rule served to overcome "the great interior censor" (people's ability) that had internalized prohibition and fear, it did so in popular festivals and for the people, as when festive laughter broke temporary freedom and strength to resist the consciousness of serious "laughed truth" (Row, 92-93).

Wingley's friendship with a view toward securing "an establishment" for one of their daughters. (In Chapter II Mrs Bennet calls Mrs Long "sensible and agreeable" for no worse reason than her having "two pieces of her own," and will probably be pushed toward Mr Wingley; Mrs Bennet believes Mrs Long, who must think of her own children, will in the end fulfill her promise to introduce Wingley to Mrs Bennet and her daughters.) A community, then, is governed by forces by which a surface fellowship is preserved while actually generalized war is going on, with social standing and a high yearly income as its prizes.

Hostilities, however, do not only exist among a neighborhood's families: they are also prevalent within a single family, even between husband and wife. Verbal struggle is one of the forms war takes:

"My dear Mr Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Mithrasfield is let at last?"

Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is so," returned she; "for Mrs Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"Yes, what is to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough. (PP, I)

What we witness here is a battle in which information and showing deference in acquiring that information are the



weapons. The interlocutors, then, are not only warriors but beggars: Mr Bennett pretends not to care enough about the data to be required to make any effort to obtain it, while Mrs Bennett wishes her husband to admit he is interested before she will provide the data. There are two superimposed models at work in this communicative interchange: one a martial, the other a commercial one.

When Mr Bennett rather perversely refuses to show the proper attitude toward Mrs Bennett's information, when he even refuses to admit that he will visit Bingley, Mrs Bennett introduces a new weapon: her nervous. But in this novel, as we shall see, disease and death are sources of excitement: they do not threaten or provide fear. Thus her husband will steadfastly refuse to be intimidated by her feigned illness. He has an apt counter ready for her every move, showing himself an skilful player than she is. The underlying metaphor in this case is "game," with war as a deeper substratum.

In spite of this constant sparring between the two interlocutors, the battle we witness is a merry one. The attitude the text seems to call for is one of gay confidence that there are no unavowed intentions involved, and that, even in the presence of malice, these verbal thrusts and discursive triangles and circuits will leave the participants unscathed. In this sense we may see the verbal hunting in Bride and Prejudice as "a feast of death and regeneration in the comic aspect" (Rus, 182). Indeed, Mrs Bennett, as mother

how severely beaten, will rise from each encounter with renewed energy to pursue her goals. And no matter how often she takes a foul of herself in the course of the novel, she will find new and surprising ways to display her grotesque absurdity.

The chapter ends with an apparently authoritative comment on the part of the narrator, characterizing Mr. Bennett as an odd "mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humor, reserve, and surprise," and Mrs. Bennett, his wife of twenty-three years, as a silly, ignorant woman who did not understand her husband, though "her mind was less difficult to develop" (27, 2). As Julia Fassett Brown observes, this seemingly conclusive trivialization of Mrs. Bennett's powers is contradicted by the novel itself. The more we see Mrs. Bennett in action, the more we are required

to acknowledge the subtlety, the variety and complexity of this woman's "mean understanding." The evidence of moral rationalism, the skepticism, judgmental sensibility revealed in such statements as "mean understanding, little indignation, and covertish temper," are always checked by action and dialogue.

Even without proceeding to observe Mrs. Bennett in later episodes, we find already, in this very chapter, subtle indications that this evaluative, seemingly sociologic paragraph is not to be interpreted too liberally. The mock-authoritative tone of the statement will neither allow us to despise (no, for instance, Miss Sigsby will!) those people who

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<sup>2</sup>Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 47.

use their community as the universe and to share their ideological position unapologetically. The opening statement, while laughing at common ideology, also parodies the language of enlightened individuals who most often, generally accepted truths, to casual safety assume that the rationalistic judgment passed on Mr and Mrs Bennet in the seemingly anecdotal concluding paragraph is to be taken at face value.

The first chapter, then, sets the gaily relativistic tone that will characterize the entire novel. As we shall see later on, this relativism can be described, borrowing F. James Joyce's words regarding "a commonplace of European satire," as the belief that, in spite of attempts to achieve universal truths, "there is . . . no accurate standard, no recognized true answer, which mortals can use to guide their lives and assess their thinking."<sup>2</sup> This opening chapter can be read as a satirical introduction into the carnivalesque fictional world that will frame the story of Elizabeth Bennet's personal growth: a world in which a close-knit community (or "neighbourhood") exhibits traits that mock intelligence with the demand for "satire."

### Satirical and Ideology in "Pride and Prejudice"

The most striking carnivalesque characteristic in *Pride and Prejudice* revolves around its focus, theme and disorderly

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<sup>2</sup>F. James Joyce, *Chamber and Musician Satire* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), p. 144.

women and the characters' diverse misalliances. Through these devices the novel affords a reversal of and laughs at conventional views on love and women, unmasking the unfair priority of their means of support and their inappropriate education. It also adopts an attitude of irreverence that mocks the grimness of sin and death, and laughs at both war and society, viewing the bonds of community as both inescapable and tinged by heavy hostility.

### Comic, Disorderly Women and Romantic Love

The two most notorious female in this novel are of course Mrs Bennet and Collins. Mrs Bennet, and to a higher degree Lydia, her youngest and wildest daughter, act also as disorderly women whose conduct subverts decorum. These characters' speech and action serve an important function, unmasking ludicrous aspects of social customs and languages. The three appear as caricatures, as grotesquely exaggerated yet convincing portraits of a rather generalized vulgarity.

Mrs Bennet, for instance, when speaking to the man she hopes will marry her eldest daughter, Jane, shamelessly and obviously advertises the young woman's beauty. Thus she praises Jane, not only at the expense of her neighbors and "particular friends" ("You must own [Charlotte Lucas] is very plain," she tells Bingley) but even putting down her own prouder daughter: "I often tell my other girls they are nothing to Jane [Jane]" (cf. FF, 42-44). Throughout the novel, Mrs Bennet's ignorance, her inability to conduct the business

of getting her daughters married with any subtlety or finesse, serves to reveal the vulgarity of the process itself as, as Lydia puts it, "getting husbands," for oneself or for one's daughters. The very worldly-conscious Miss Bingley, for instance, would never admit any of the galling Mrs Bennet is guilty of, and yet her relentless pursuit of Barry is as determinedly necessary as any husband-hunting scheme is the novel.

Lydia herself herself often plays a role similar to her mother's, for her unexpected, vague flirting merely underscores the same behavior to which sexual attraction may lead. Seeing herself in Lydia for a moment, Elizabeth comes to realize that her infatuation with Wickham has momentarily gotten the best of her judgment; thus, when Lydia claims that Wickham could not possibly have been in love with Mary King, "such a nasty little frocked thing," Elizabeth "was shocked to think that, however incapable of such consciousness of appearance herself, the consciousness of the antithesis was (Lydia other than her own breast had already harboured and fanned likewise)" (PP, 218).

Finally, Collins' absurd references to "the violence of my affection," his recourse to romantic cliché when proposing to Elizabeth, when he neither loves nor really knows, show the ridiculousness of certain conventions of love

(cf. PP, 184-85,<sup>4</sup> by his own admission, Collins has been ordered by Lady Catherine, his patroness, to marry. Her "advice" was given to Collins "the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford--between our posts at quadrille" his "violent" love for Elizabeth was thus born at this card table, before he ever saw her, and will mean he transferred to Charlotte Lucas. What makes his behavior laughable is not his ignorance of the conventions of love, but his failure to achieve any degree of plausibility in following them.

Just as these fools such as the good Catherine would be *Wuthering* *Windy*, to "interpret dialogically" with "a lefty pseudo-intelligence" that yields a "pothos-charged" lie," the whole elaborate code of "poetic," romantic love. However, there is a marked difference between our attitude as readers toward Elizabeth and the one the text seems to call for toward Mrs. Bennet, Lydia and Collins. Because our sympathies lie with Elizabeth Bennet, whose happiness often seems threatened by the actions of the fools in *Pride* and *Franklin*, they do not appear in as positive a light as Catherine Morland. And yet the novel also dwells on the several ways in which these fools breach decorum so repeatedly and hilariously that we as readers seem to be invited to revel

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<sup>4</sup>It is ironic that Collins, who professes to despise novels, behaves like the caricature of a romantic hero when he proposes to Elizabeth, speaking conventions regarding courtship, proposals and "descent families" one may find in sentimental novels.

in their inappropriacy. Austen's handling of these characters can be neatly described in Leitch's words:

A fool introduced by the author for purposes of "making strange" the world of conventional paths may himself, as a fool, be the object of the author's scorn. The author need not necessarily express a complete solidarity with such a character. Looking these figures as fools may even become pertinent. But the author needs the fool: by his very uncomprehending presence he makes strange the world of social conventionalizing. By representing stupidity, the novel teaches prose intelligences, prose vision. Regarding fools . . . the novelist's eye is taught a sort of prose vision, the vision of a world confused by assumptions of pathos and by felicity.

By engaging her fools in dialogue with the "poetry" of conventions of love, Austen teaches her "prose vision" which allows her "to expose and structure images" of this "social language," that of romance (cf. EL, 144). The function of these "fools" in the novel, then, is one of denunciation, of prefabrication of a social code. Laffy spiritual love is shown to be ludicrous, a travesty by which a coarse commercial exchange is hidden from view, and by means of which individuals are led deeper into self-delusion. The foolish behavior of Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, and Lydia acts as a mirror in which distortion leads to revelation, for it is through hyperbolic exaggeration that we may attack a widespread social ideology that usually appears concealed in a web of duplicity.

In addition to their function as fools, however, both Mrs. Bennet and Lydia are women who "make spectacles of themselves," female grotesques who were unaware of codes of feminine decorum, who flout them, and who therefore inno-

date threatening her, her women, benevolent disorder in social relationships that tend to severely constrain them.<sup>5</sup> Their usefulness is benevolent, from a feminist viewpoint, because in subverts such codes and relationships. From a serious, rationalistic perspective, Mrs Bennet could be seen as a sobering reflection of what a faulty feminine education will produce. Her ignorance and frivolousness, her inconsiderate, undeviling obsession with getting her daughters married, her warped values,<sup>6</sup> contribute to make the Bennet home an uncomfortable place, a site of folly and vulgarity.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, her folly in itself is a form of disorder within the novel that subverts traditional portraits of ludicrous

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques," in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*.

<sup>6</sup> Mrs Bennet, it must be remembered, does not only praise Elizabeth to every toadied who also idealistically side to Jane's misery. While Jane is trying to bear her disappointment, her mother demands "Jane to confess that if [Kingley] did not come back she should thank herself very ill used. It needed all Jane's steady goodness to bear these attacks with tolerable tranquillity" (PP, 128). The clearer it becomes that Kingley is not coming back, the longer Mrs Bennet's expressions of aversion "about Wetherfield and its master" is the end, even patient, until Jane complains to Elizabeth that their mother has "no idea of the pain she gives us by her continual reflections on his" (PP, 134).

<sup>7</sup> While Elizabeth sees "Mrs Bennet's rage" as testimony to the idea that "female power is effectively synonymous with power abused" ("Anson and Alcott on *Wetherfield*," in *Elizabeth L. Gordon, ed., Fictions*, p. 274). Actually, Mrs Bennet's position as housemaker can hardly be seen as a position of power, for she is completely dependent on her husband's whim. Also, the novel provides a strong antithetical figure in Mrs Gardiner, who, after all, is remarkable enough to warn Elizabeth against falling in love without causing offense. In "a wonderful instance of advice being given on such a point, without being resented" (PP, 140-41).



women as obedient creatures under their husbands' tutelage."<sup>1</sup>

In *Belshazzar's Feast*:

Folly is . . . deeply ambivalent. It has the negative element of debasement and destruction . . . and the positive element of renewal and truth. Folly is the opposite of wisdom-inverted wisdom, inverted truth . . . Folly is a form of gay festive wisdom, free from all laws and restrictions, as well as from preoccupations and seriousness (RWH, 884).

Using fools, disorderly Mrs. Bennett and Lydia help to subvert "official laws and conventions" which they either flout or attempt to follow so deeply that they make a mockery of them.

If Mrs. Bennett subverts conjugal decorum, Lydia is a character designed to undermine conventional ideologies that either deny women's sexuality or consider it monstrous; Lydia inverts the figure of the female slave, juring men to perdition, as Susan Gubar has observed, the "constitutive woman of Augustan satire allowed 'the satirist to exorcise his fear of mortality and physicality by projecting it onto the Other,'" while also functioning as a sign of his "disjunction with rationality."<sup>2</sup> In Swift's "Strephon and Chloe," for example, the woman, beautiful, wise, ethereal,

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<sup>1</sup>Compare Mrs. Bennett, for instance, to the wife in Goldsmith's "The Vicar of Wakefield," where the protagonist is forced to correct his wife and daughters when they dress in absurd finery to attend the village church; the females are fully submissive to the superior wisdom of their father and husband.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent historical survey of such concepts of women in English literature, see Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup>Susan Gubar, "The Female Monster in Augustan Satire," *ELP*, 3 (Winter 1977), p. 283.

passive, loses her lower love marriage by convincing him of her lack of corporeality. Lydia, on the other hand, is an inverted picture of this facade, for she is not very attractive, and is stout, active, loud, indeed raucous. Her laughter is disruptive and her flirting outrageous; soldiers appeal to her especially, as they did to her mother in her youth (cf. PP, 124) and still do in her old age (now vicariously, as husbands for her daughters--cf. PP, 38). Although both the protagonist and the narrator deplore these two women's conduct, the author lets them achieve all their ends. In spite of the severity of contemporary society's sometimes hysterical feminine "misbehavior," even "she" is dealt with lightly. Lydia's "disgrace," her decision to elope and live with Wickham even though he does not propose to marry her, for instance, would have produced very grave results: if Darcy had not intervened, she would probably have been eventually abandoned by her "seducer" and been forced either to prostitute herself or to go back to her family, who may have confined her, "excluded from the world, in some distant farm house" (PP, 124). On *Frída and Penélope*, however, this "overwound" female is allowed to marry and go on being her irresponsible self, "entured, unshamed, wild, noisy, and fearless" (PP, 125), blissfully unaware of the danger she has been in.

Also, the behavior of Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, and even Kitty as female grotesques serves the carnivalesque function of

underlying the dignity of the two eldest daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, as heroines, and thus subverting conventional heroic ideal. In keeping with the "universality" of survival laughter, which was directed at the "survival's participants" themselves (RHF, II), in this novel we are made to regard the characters we identify with as readers no less than as readers: growth, for both Elizabeth and Darcy, for example, is a result of their humiliation. Their love relationship is likewise neither idealized nor insulated from assessment. The way in which the process of falling in love and seeking a husband in *Pride and Prejudice* is vividly documented, even in its ludicrous or random aspects, made many early readers dislike the novel. For these readers were used to fictions treating love as "an unexamined ideal," according to S. G. Swithun, in the view of many of Austen's contemporaries, "the ungovernably and wholly like manners of the Bennet family were not the stuff for fiction. . . ." Such readers objected to the novel's mixing laughter at romance, for they

needed to preserve literature as a kind of higher, happier reality, and Jane Austen's novels were a particular threat to the greatly prized universality of romantic and sentimental fiction. While few readers could deny that they enjoyed reading the novels—for the vitality of the characters, the wit, the accuracy and realism of her picture of society—praise came qualifiedly, focused round with qualifications: that her characters are socially and morally vulgar, that the novels are merely entertaining, that the "instruction" (what we might call the edifiable "moral" of the story) is not inspiring or elevating, that the common-place is

perfectly rendered but the phenomenon is not what we look for in literature."

In this sense, parody is omnipresent in *Fride and Frelidice*, although it is not the type of parody aimed at individual works which can be found in *Northanger Abbey*.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the novel seems written against the background of a profound understanding of the prevalent literary attitudes and the "official" literature of Austen's times.

If, for example, we compare *Fride and Frelidice* with *Barnes's Exilina*, a novel to which Austen's has some similarities and easy points of contrast,<sup>18</sup> we observe that the treatment of grotesque relatives of the heroine is rather different. The gross misbehavior of *Exilina's* grand-mother, Mrs. novel, though over-the-top in its treatment of parental authority, cannot really affect the way others see the angelic heroine. The old lady's grotesqueness constantly threatens the peace of mind of the heroine, but the ridiculous predictions in which she is often involved cannot taint the beloved love relationship. In *Fride and Frelidice*, on the

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<sup>17</sup> E. C. Norton, "Introduction," *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, ed. E. C. Norton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 7-18.

<sup>18</sup> The episode in which Elizabeth's father first appears is very close exactly to which Mary tells Elizabeth that he "not handsome enough to tempt" her to dance; for instance, there is a dialogue contrast to a scene in *Exilina* in which the title character also overhears her son asking questions about her at a ball (*Exilina*, p. 85). For a perceptive, yet rather traditionalistic discussion of Elizabeth's father as an "anti-Exilina" see Kenneth Sizer, *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion*, pp. 57-58.

contrary, "the total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed" by everyone in the Barrett household but Elizabeth and Jane (aid by Lydia and Mrs Barrett especially) when they object to Jane's marriage to Bingley and hesitate to love Elizabeth himself (PP, 198). Traditional feminist heroines are exceptional women whose extraordinary qualities exempt them from the common fate of females. This novel counters such a stance by submitting its most sympathetically presented characters to humiliating treatment. Lydia's elopement and marriage, furthermore, corroboratively degrade both Elizabeth, whose chances of marrying Darcy appear diminished at a time she is beginning to love him, and Darcy himself, who must atone what Lady Catherine calls the "pollution" of Pemberley's "shades," by accepting to become brother-in-law to Wickham, a scoundrel and his father's steward, and Lydia, a woman condemned by the contemporary double sexual standard.

In the end, the novel's attitude to these disruptive females, Lydia and Mrs Barrett, is ambivalent, for they are both shown as distorted products of a mistaken education of women, and as much contrasted to Elizabeth and Jane in morals and moral attitudes, and made to act as subverters of a social order idealized to women. As will be discussed below, the social situation of women, the lack of "honourable provision" for their fate (cf. PP, 138), other than marriage, helps expose their floating sense of society's values for females

conduct (either seriously, as Charlotte does in her necessary marriage, or fortuitously, as Lydia does in her eloping while convinced by Longshore--cf. pp. 181).

#### Carnival Novellism and Emma's Education

Closely linked with the use of comic and disorderly women for purposes of production is the employment of carnivalistic novellism in *Emma and Persuasion*. By juxtaposing personal characteristics, ideas and discourses that in official ideology<sup>20</sup> appear distinct and well-differentiated, the novel "brings together, unifies, welds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (PWP, 188).

The author of *Emma and Persuasion* seems to proceed in creating novellism, which ranges from the juxtaposition of characters to the mingling of seemingly incompatible discourses, going through the blending of dissimilar character-types in a single character. The list of instances of the first of these types of novellism is long: the most intelligent characters (Mr Bennett, Charlotte Lucas) appear married to the most foolish (Mrs Bennett, Mr Collins); the plainest ones (Mary King, Miss de Bourgh) may be temporarily or insignificantly linked to the handsomest (Richard, Henry); the most obscure author (Mrs Bennett) has the wildest daughter (Elizabeth), while the strongest and most dominating (Lady

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<sup>20</sup>That is, within of official novellistic ideology, regarding women and love, with which Austen's fiction engages in dialogue, see pages 185-88 of the present study.

Catherine) has borne the heaviest loads (Miss de Bourgh). Many characters also exhibit seemingly paradoxical combinations of traits. Thus, the socially highest-ranking characters (Lady Catherine, Darcy) are also the least rude, while some of those with the greatest "elegance of mind" (the outcasts) belong to the least fashionable social groups. Similarly, one of the most principled characters (Darcy) is temperarily judged to be the most blameworthy, while the most unprincipled of all (Wickham) has the best manners and for a time appears totally blameless. Some characters seem to be embodied contradictions: Lady Catherine, for instance, is characterized by her "dignified impertinence," while Collins is a queer mixture of servility and self-importance.

Furthermore, the timing of discourse, as well as the placing of discourse in the least appropriate circumstances, produces the most ironic passages in the novel, as both Mr Collins and Mary Bennet spend lofty moments and absurd situations. On the occasion of Lydia's elopement, for instance, Mr Collins' letter to Mr Bennet is a mixture of selfish gloating (as Collins reflects that, had Elizabeth married him, "I might have been involved in all your errors and dissipation") and reckless unconcern for the feelings of others (the Bennets' "present distress," writes Collins, "must be of the bitterest kind, because proceeding from a cause which no time can remove.") By way of consolation he goes on to say, "The death of your daughter would have been a blessing

is conspire to this." He then blames the women for their "fearly degree of indigence" in bringing up Lizzie, but accuses the "conventions" that "our own disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity, at so early an age." All of these cruelly insensitive remarks are introduced by pretenses of plain consideration: "I feel myself called upon, by our relationship, and my situation in life, to sympathize with you on the grievous affliction you are now suffering under . . . No arguments shall be wanting on my part, that can eliminate as severe a misfortune" (PP, 284-7). His reference to his "situation in life," Collins' choice for his profession as Christian minister, makes his cruel blindness all the more ironic.

On the same occasion, Mary Bennet consoles "herself with . . . moral extractions from the evil before them." After telling Elizabeth "we must . . . pour into the wounded bosoms of each other, the balm of sisterly consolation," she coolly draws from the event "this useful lesson; that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable-- . . . that her reputation is no less precious than it is beautiful" (PP, 288). Such abstract reflections, showing detachment and indifference to Lizzie's fate, make Elizabeth lift "up her eyes in amazement." This cold-hearted condemnation of a sister to "eternal ruin" because of "one false step" can hardly stem from "sisterly love," any more than Collins' advice to Mr. Bennet to send off Lizzie and not even allow her name "to be mentioned in your



bearing" has anything to do with the "Christian forgiveness" is perhaps to recommend (cf. PP, 343-4). Thus the novel undercuts the ruthless character of aristocratic condemnations of feminine misconduct, even when accompanied by a false "loving" pretense.

Mary's philosophizing is all the more interesting because it proceeds from the most studious and well-read of all the women in this novel. This passage must be considered in relation with two other conversations dealing with feminine education: the one among Ringley, his sister, Dorcy and Elizabeth at Hetherfield, the other between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine at Rosings. In the first, Miss Ringley holds up the ideal of the "accomplished woman," which her brother maintains as the abilities to "paint, to draw, to cover screens and net parterres." For Miss Ringley the list of "accomplishments" a woman must have includes the usual performing abilities and social graces acquired at fashionable boarding-schools. Dorcy adds to the requirements: an accomplished woman must possess "something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading." Elizabeth, on the other hand, maintains that she has never met such a person: "I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united" (PP, 35-38). Her remarks can be read as a protest against the injunction of demanding perfection from women, against the confining stereotype one writes until "a

rather-copy elegant female."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in the conversation with Lady Catherine, Elizabeth defends the method by which her parents provided her and her sisters with masters if they wished to learn (PP, 142). With regard to her rejection of the "accomplished woman" stereotype, Elizabeth seems to us in perfect agreement with the positions of contemporary feminists like Wollstonecraft.<sup>15</sup> But the passage showing Mary Bennet's obsequious servilism may be read as engaging in dialogue with the cry for feminine education. For Mary has been educated, and has read extensively, but what she has been taught by her studies reflects the accumulated anti-feminist "wisdom" of the age. We must do more than expose women to the caricatures drilled into her by tradition and are taught, Austen seems to be saying, before women's education can truly become a solution to the feminine predicament.

Through these and similar passages we see that the similes and juxtaposition of discourses in Pride and Prejudice serves as basis for ideological reflection on both love and the situation of women. The profiles of fools and beguiling similitudes are two of the most active means used

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<sup>14</sup>Marian E. Fowler, "The Feminist Bias of Pride and Prejudice," Salisbury Review, 42 (1975), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup>For a recent view of the similarities between views held by contemporary feminists such as Wollstonecraft, Francesc Hesterfield, and Catherine Graham, and many of the positions and attitudes of Elizabeth Bennet, see Marian E. Fowler, "The Feminist Bias of Pride and Prejudice."

by Austin to expose conventional wisdom and "pathos-charged lies."

#### Class, Death and Resurrection

The narrative devices we have been discussing, fools, disorderly women and assassinations, however, do not merely function in a negative way, pointing up society's failings, the ineluctability of certain social languages. The delight we derive from the eccentric discourses of the novel's female serves to deride/revive life, to allow us to adopt an irreverence which holds few things sacred and deflates even the solemnity of death. Before we investigate the ways in which *Brick and Foundation* propitiate a dialogic understanding of the meaning of society and community, however, we must briefly consider the novel's determination to treat "sacred" themes such as sexual misconduct and death laughingly through the agency of the novel's clown, acting as "herald of the laughing truth," as the dissolution of the hypocrisy of official, sacred truth (188, xi-xij).

In keeping with the character of folk humor, which "mocks, but revives and renews at the same time," avoiding "bitter rejection" (188, li), *Brick and Foundation* both derides anti-feminist discourses and allows us to view the situation of women and their need to enter into "love" relationships in a light vein. In this sense, laughter in this novel is festive, rather than simply satirical or condemnatory. It is not surprising, therefore, that what would have been seen by

The novel's contemporary as Lydia's dancing sin carries no serious consequences. The evil in this novel, whether physical or spiritual, is laughable such generally serious topics as illness and even death are the subject of many jokes. Thus, Mrs Bennett, whenever she cannot get her way, drops both indignance and "terribly used," and complains that "nobody made her so very nervous!" (PP, 144). Her suffering stems from her inability to withstand frustrations: as she says herself, "It makes me very nervous and poorly to be thwarted as is my own darling" (PP, 144). Being "thwarted" because Lady Lucas will have a daughter married before she will throw her into a "most pitiable state," or "agony of ill humour" (PP, 124).

Both Mr and Mrs Bennett, as well as Collins, refer to death repeatedly, in a caricatured attitude by which fear of death is defeated. Thus, Mr Bennett ironically tells his wife that if Jane dies of an illness contracted when, as Mrs Bennett had hoped, it rains after Jane intends to visit the Bingleys on horseback, it will be a comfort to know "that in the end is pursuit of Mr Bingley, and under your orders" (PP, 71). Collins, for his part, seems to gloat as he refers to "the melancholy event" (Mr Bennett's death) that will make Collins the happy owner of Longbourn (PP, 144). As soon as the Lucases find out that Collins has proposed to their daughter Charlotte, Lady Lucas begins to calculate "how many years longer Mr Bennett [the present owner of Longbourn] was likely to live. . ." (PP, 122). Mrs Bennett takes "comfort" in

the face of Hingley's description of Jene, in the suggestion that "Jene will die of a broken heart, and then he will be sorry for what he has done" (FF, 184). The lady also entertains "terrific fears" when Epile argues, not about what is very likely to happen to her, but about melodramatic, improbable events: "I know [Mr Bennett] will fight within [Epile's "seducer"] ... and then he will be killed, and what is to become of us all? The collision [she will benefit from the affair] on Mr Bennett's property will turn us out, before he is cold in his grave." (FF, 248) Mrs Bennett also talks to her husband about his own death, provoking his "consuming" reply, "Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor" (FF, 133). These allusions to joking references to death change it into a Jeffersonian mask that seems to lose its threatening meaning. Such a victory over the fear of death is one aspect of the attitude of carnival laughter, which "builds its own world across the official world," creating "a whole comic world" (SSW, 14). Thus, for example, the reiteration of every crime by revellers during the Roman carnival, willing for death to those who did not obey the festival's requirements, suspended the grim associations of death sentences.<sup>30</sup>

The degradation of official attitudes towards human reality is also achieved through Austen's use of clowning. Through the presence of clowns in *Field and Fiddle* Austen

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bakhtin's discussion of Goethe's description of Roman carnival (SSW, 248).

advances her readers' enjoyment of the stupidity of the novel's fools without dwelling on the deleterious effects of their behavior. Opening also allows us to relish the ludicrous aspect of the wounding of sympathetic characters, in spite of their pain or embarrassment.

The two characters who repeatedly play the clowning role in the novel are Elizabeth and her father, Mr. Bennet. The very first time we see Elizabeth she is engaged in laughing at herself and Darcy, after he scorns her as a dancing partner. She tells the story among her friends "with great spirit ... for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous" (PP. 117). Through laughter, then, Elizabeth overcomes the humiliation of being physically appraised as a female by men at a ball and then judged as "widy jest intolerable" by Darcy (PP. 119). Further, unlike the censorious satirist, whose negative laughter places his "above the object of his mockery" (RHS. 119), Elizabeth counters exclusionary criticism with mockery of both Darcy and of herself: in her own story she appears as the laughable well-follower, slighted by an arrogant, ridiculously self-important man.

In her social encounters with Darcy Elizabeth repeatedly answers his vain arrogance.<sup>17</sup> As he listens to her "leading

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<sup>17</sup>For a discussion of  *Pride and Prejudice* as the story of the humbling of a "pretentious hero" in the Richardson-Burney tradition, with a concomitant "partial reformation" of the heroine as an "anti-Faulstich," see Kenneth Surin, *Jane Austen's Art of Silence*, pp. 75-108.

Colonel Porter to give us a ball at Merton," for instance, Elizabeth senses his superior attitudes and sees in "a topic which always makes a lady nervous," he says condescendingly. In consequence, Elizabeth decides to be supercilious herself to avoid "growing afraid of him," as she tells Charlotte (PP, 34). In a later gathering she half-mockingly warns him that she will not be intimidated by him, for she has interpreted his question ["Do you not feel a great inclination . . . to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?"<sup>18</sup>] as motivated by an intention of displaying her taste for dancing.<sup>19</sup> Then she informs him that "I always delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and shewing a person of their premeditated weakness. I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not wish to dance a reel at all--and now despise me if you dare" (PP, 35).

Her attitude, therefore, is one of "hardness" aimed at using laughter to triumph over Percy's social superiority, his patriarchal haughtiness, cannot see her while she laughs. This is precisely the function of the unveiled clown, using "festive folk laughter," says Bakhtin, to triumph over "power, . . . earthly kings, . . . the earthly upper classes, [over] all that oppresses and restrains" (BKH, 33).

<sup>18</sup>Actually it is not Percy's intention to show contempt for her, but Elizabeth is too prejudiced against him to admit that he admires her.

including masculine egotism."<sup>17</sup> Like her father, Elizabeth acts as a clown when she speaks with unique freedom "in otherwise unacceptable language" (cf. 28, 489; 38, as her mother says, when she takes free to "run on in the wild manner you are suffered to do at home" (27, 42).<sup>18</sup> The ways in which her speech motivates "disturbances and shufflings of language and labels"<sup>19</sup> when Darcy tells her "you find great enjoyment in occasionally professing opinions which in fact are not your own" (27, 134).

Indeed, Elizabeth enjoys not only brazenly distorting language, but also observing absurdity in others. As she

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<sup>17</sup>It is significant that all the exchanges between Darcy and Elizabeth referred to in the preceding paragraph are related to the subject of dancing, a subject, as Darcy hints, dear to a lady's heart (27, 14.) This goddess avoids and despises dancing, while a foolish female such as Lydia delights in this exercise as in nothing else. Elizabeth herself loves to dance, as do most of Austen's heroines. Dancing, it would seem, allowed women both a form of direct sexual contact and strong physical exercise, two pleasures severely restricted for women during Austen's times. It would be safe, therefore, as a symbol of non-threatening feminine enjoyment: Darcy's contempt for it underlines his negative sexual power, his siding with feminine oppression and patriarchy.

<sup>18</sup>Again, this passage, in which Mrs Bennet thus excites Elizabeth, is significant from a feminist viewpoint: Mrs Bennet is here talking upon "ingley, while Elizabeth lectures with him, good-willingly but on a level of equality, telling him "It does not necessarily follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours." Mrs Bennet's release is almost at restraining Elizabeth, whose otherwise she does not fully understand, but who is not behaving with the degree of servile respect before which Mrs Bennet sometimes lapses in order to amuse a husband (in this case, for Jane).

<sup>19</sup>Elizabeth's phrase to describe the clown, in 28, 489.



page 18, "Follies and successes, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I see" (PP, 17). Often her delight is made explicit by the text and steers our attention to the laughable aspects of an episode. Thus, for instance, we see Collins' proposal through her eyes, and share her reaction when "Mr Collins, with all his serious composure" talks of "being run away with by his feelings," making Elizabeth "no more laughing" that she could not trust herself to speak in order to interrupt him (PP, 145). Even when she is not laughing, her mere presence is a comic-type English behavior which is enough to make us sensitive to it, as it often happens when the Bennett stock of humor, in a family party or with their close friends, the Lucases. Thus, her satirical bent affects us as readers: because we know she must be enjoying any displays of folly, our attitudes are directed to laughter.

However, even when Elizabeth is gained by her family's glib displays, we are still made to enjoy the scene thanks to Mr Bennett's peculiar attitude. His wit and intelligence are obvious from the beginning, his judgment of Mr Collins' first letter, for instance, as evidencing "a mixture of servility and self-importance" (PP, 84), is later shown by Collins' behavior to be an acute portrait of the man. As we become aware of his intellectual acuity, as well as of his love of and closeness to the protagonist, we seem to be partially led by his attitudes to the action as it unfolds.

Although Mr Bennett, "except in an occasional glance at Elizabeth," requires "no partner in his pleasure" in witnessing boarding, the narrator's reports of his inner reactions allow us to share in his "honest enjoyment" (PP, 44). Once Mr Bennett's attitude has been established, our reading of his family's embarrassing behavior will often be directed by his stance, as we see him, for instance, look as proud as any stranger could observe the Bennets choose to expose themselves during social occasions (cf. PP, 101).

Distanced as Mr Bennett and Elizabeth function as shown, their interactions with other characters often lead us to reflect on social codes and languages. Although there are strong individualistic tendencies in Mr Bennett, tendencies which, in the view of both the narrator and Elizabeth, often lead him to irresponsibility,<sup>21</sup> his varied interactions with Mrs Bennett or with Collins often serve a double function. For they may act both as evidence of his psychological quirks, such as his penchant for defending his exclusion, and as indices pointing to a possible weakening of social conventions. Thus, for instance, Mr Bennett's ironic admission to Collins to "stay quietly at home" rather than return to visit the Bennets, for dear lady Catherine may be disappointed, can be seen from two different viewpoints. With

<sup>21</sup>Indeed, as Marvin Magyck says, Mr Bennett "has become an ironic spectator almost totally self-enclosed..." ("Images as Disorientations:  *Pride and Prejudice*," in *James Austen's A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 44).

regard to Mr Bennett's desire as an individual, the advice is actually aimed at keeping away the boring Collins, who tends to invade Mr Bennett's library: from this viewpoint the humor lies in the speaker's thinly disguised breach of propriety. With regard to the relationship between Collins and Lady Catherine, however, the exchange serves to underscore Collins' utter servility toward his patroness, which may lead him to place her interests before those of his own family. To Mr Bennett's injunction, "You had better neglect your relations, than run the risk of offending your patroness," Mr Collins responds, "I am particularly obliged to you for this friendly caution, and you may depend upon my not taking so material a step without her ladyship's concurrence" (II, 112). In this way the requirement of near-ideal humility and obsequiousness before the great is ridiculed.

Elizabeth's "blowings," on the other hand, often follow a more conventional path. Once, for instance, while dancing with Mary, the usually unobtrusively elegant, she decides to "punish" her partner by obliging him to talk, and thus makes some slight observations, and then addresses him again:

"It is long time to say anything now, Mr Barry. --I talked about the dance, and you ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples."

After a few additional remarks in this vein, supposing the social map that requires such small talk between dancing partners, as well as the conventional character of what is usually said ("Perhaps by and bye I may observe that points

balls are much pleasanter than public ones") Elizabeth suggests that, even as such conversations may be, the need for social bonding may make them desirable.<sup>12</sup>

"You must speak a little, you know. It would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together, and yet for the advantage of gossip, conversation ought to be so arranged as that they may have the trouble of saying as little as possible."

To Garry's question about whether she refers to her own wish to be silent or to what she thinks to be his, Elizabeth evenly replies that they are both "of an unusual, tentative disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will move the whole room, and be handed down to posterity with all the éclat of a proverb" (PP, 81). Elizabeth's criticism of the individualistic arrogance of those who scorn small talk is a thinly veiled reproach against Garry, who recognizes it as such, replying, "This is no very striking resemblance of your own character, I am sure . . . How near it may be to mine, I cannot pretend to say."<sup>13</sup>

We will later consider the question of whether this "portrait" of Garry is indeed "faithful" or unjust. For now, I will merely point out that Elizabeth's criticism is, like folk humor, satirical, simultaneously laughing at convers-

<sup>12</sup>It is such a type of communication that Roman Jakobson calls "phatic," emphasizing its important social function in keeping the channels among interlocutors open. (Cf. "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language and Literature*, ed. Krystina Pomorska and Stephen Rudy [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1967], pp. 81-84; first published in *Essays on Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1961], pp. 150-71.)

tion and recognizing the need for social existence as bonds among people. This issue is related to the complex question of the proper role of the community and its discourse in a person's life, a question which is central in this novel,<sup>2</sup> and which must be discussed as socio-philosophical background for the understanding of the heroine's development. In connection with this question we will examine, first, how *friendship* and *community* together form the bonds among human beings in general and neighbors in particular, and second, the role played by a utopian understanding of community.

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<sup>2</sup>The importance of this question for the interpretation of the novel has long been recognized, though different critics have used different names for what I am referring to as "friend" and "community." Samuel Elizer (cf. "Jane Austen's *Friend* and *Community* in the Eighteenth Century Mode," in *Friend and Community*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Donald Gray (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), pp. 18-41) refers to the "art-nature" dichotomy, a terminology partially adopted by Kenneth Surin (cf. *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion*, p. 184), contrary to whom I place the question in the context of the internalization of sensitive individuals with the forces of social existence (cf. "On *Friend* and *Community*," in *Friend and Community*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 144). Marvin Muffric refers to the social pressures that tend to limit the individual's freedom of choice ("Dress as Discrimination," p. 81). Adrienne Richman concludes that the novel balances the claims of self and society (the *Interpretation of the British*, p. 141). Julia Fawcett Brown asserts that Jane Austen was concerned in *Friend and Community* with the need for social rituals and moral norms, though she recognized that the elevation of the moral intelligence of the society largely depends on the individuality of individual beings (Jane Austen's *World*, p. 74). Finally, Mary Poovey states that in *Friend and Community* "marriage remains for Austen the ideal paradigm of the most perfect fusion between the individual and society" (*The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984], p. 241).

### Community as Blooded War

The first time social formalities are alluded to in *Frída and Fúrnjóðinn* comes, as we have seen, when Mrs Bennet, arguing with her husband, says that the Bennet ladies will not be able to visit Ringley, a newcomer, until Mr Bennet goes. In the following chapter it is Mr Bennet who refers to the next ball his daughters will be attending, and declares his intention to introduce Mr Ringley to a friend of the Bennets, Mrs Long. Since Mrs Bennet does not know her husband has already paid the required courtesy call to Ringley, her response is, "Nonsense, nonsense." Mr Bennet then pretends to misunderstand her, asking her, "Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you there" (pp. 7).

In the observation of social formalities and customs someone? Any revision of the critical literature dealing with this novel in *Frída and Fúrnjóðinn* will lead to a variety of complex questions. For instance, is the importance of such observations emphasized in this novel as further evidence of the tyranny of society over the individual, who would be in danger of becoming "incalculably from his social role"?<sup>10</sup> Or are social norms conceived in the novel as an essential sign of a deeper "social reality," which provides the proper

<sup>10</sup>Martin Hedrick, "Treach as Discrimination," p. 44.

framework for the self<sup>142</sup> is the question of social manners in this novel to be framed within the broader perspective of a fictional conflict between tradition and "class pride," represented by Eury, and "repressive individualism," represented by Elizabeth?<sup>143</sup> Is the etiquette or introductions one more aspect of that Austenian stress on social rituals that seems unintelligible to modern readers unless we place ourselves within the context of contemporary culture, in order to understand the "total rituals" of her age? Furthermore, does Austen's picture of this age contain "civilized forms," such as the social norms for introductions, and "domestic energies," such as Mrs Bennet's irrationality, both productive of meaning?<sup>144</sup>

All the different conceptualizations of the social framework and its demands on characters seem to be related to an underlying question: Is Austen's stance in *Pride and Prejudice* more sympathetic to the claims of society (or of firm, established structures, etc.) or does the novel lean more to favoring the needs of the individual (or the self, or the pleasure principle)? Part of the difficulty in resolving this question may be due to the fact that, as Claudia Johnson

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<sup>142</sup>Cf. Kristin Gausman, *Improvement of the Estate*, p. 142.

<sup>143</sup>Cf. Kenneth Surin, *Jane Austen's Art of Allusion*, p. 124.

<sup>144</sup>Cf. Julia Fawcett Howe, *Jane Austen's World*, pp. 74-75.

has said, "Koster has contrived Myths and Fictions in such a way that virtually every argument about it can be undercut with a built-in countervailing argument, a qualifying 'on the other hand' which forestalls conclusions."<sup>22</sup> Thus, an analysis of Koster's method should start out from an awareness of her structuring her fiction in such, in Bakhtinian terms, can be called a "zone of direct contact with humanism ... reality," a reality seen as contemporary and fluid.<sup>23</sup> In such an approach, this novel will appear as "a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interrelate each other."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Koster's representation of community may be analyzed from the viewpoint of the interaction between a central narratorial voice, the voices of individual characters, and the voice of the community, or neighborhood. Through such an analysis, the present study will ask in what sense the bonds among members of certain communities appear to be viewed sympathetically by Koster, and in what sense, or from what perspective, they seem to be painted in very negative terms.

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<sup>22</sup>Clement Johnson, Jane Austen's Women: Politics and the Novel, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup>Michail Bakhtin, "Epic and the Novel," Dialectic Imagination, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup>Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Sovietistic Discourse," Dialectic Imagination, p. 47.



I am using the term "community" rather than "society" in order to distance this discussion from the commonplace, in critiques of this novel, of equating collectivity with social order, with the "powers that be" in a patriarchal, class society. It is due to this equation that Elizabeth Bennet so often appears as "the champion of the prerogatives of individual desire," jeopardizing "both the social order, which demands self-denial, and the moral order, which is based on absolute Christian principles."<sup>2</sup> I believe a radical change in perspective is needed in order to break off from the cycle of critical action-reaction in which Elizabeth (or her creator, or both) is alternately praised or blamed for her individualism, or, lately, blamed for not being individualistic enough. I will therefore view collectivity in this novel, not as status quo, as established powers, but from the popular standpoint of a studious carnivalesque spirit. By this change in perspective we may recognize the gay assertion of community in *Prick and Rickshaw*, an assertion which often leads to self-mockery and to the grotesque misapprehension of collective failings.

#### Hostility and Community

In the novel's initial statement, the narrator already assumes an ironic tone resulting from the overlaying of the voice of a "neighbourhood's families" and the voice of the educated, enlightened individual. An analysis of the first

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, p. 144.

paragraph in Chapter III, where the voices of individual characters mix and merge with the narrator's report of their verbal exchanges, may serve as introduction to the discussion of the concept of community. This chapter opens soon after Mr Bennett's admission that he has already visited Mr Singlet.

Not all that Mrs Bennett, however, with the assistance of her five daughters, could ask on the subject was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr Singlet. They attacked him in various ways with barbed questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant remarks; but he eluded the skill of them all; and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbour Lady Lucas. Her report was highly favourable. Mr William had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and to crown the whole, he meant to be at the next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful to be met at dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr Singlet's heart were entertained (pp. 21).

In the narrator's opening report of several exchanges between the Bennett ladies and Mr Bennett, the former seek in vain to obtain information from the latter. (As in the first chapter, we observe here a use over information, only now its holder refuses to relinquish it; power for Mr Bennett lies not in communication but in reserve.) The initial sentence refers, in Johnsonian parallel construction, to three types of speech acts (questions, suppositions, distant remarks) mounted by the ladies. This use of three parallel noun phrases is later mirrored in the description of Singlet, which is the narrator's report of Lady Lucas' report of her husband's

report. Thus, structural linguistic similarity is used to link a collective communicative effort (by Mrs Bennett and her five daughters) and a first overlapping of voices (a report of a report of a report). Immediately, the narrator relates, in free indirect speech, the reaction of Mrs Bennett and her daughters. Their collective exclamation of delight provides the first truly *typical construction*,<sup>12</sup> in which the narrator's ironic, chapter voice momentarily adopts the unstable tone of the ladies' anticipation. The mention of the assembly in the preceding sentence makes this exclamation seem like a rumour spreading through all the households where there are ladies who attend balls. The narrator notes fortune- and husband-hunting families, with their collective "lively hopes," but the mockery is tempered by references to ladies' love of dancing, a love, after all, which Austen's heroines greatly share. The passive voice at the end generalizes, making the passage more inclusive, the sense of collectivity stronger. Thus the narrator's attitude toward these collective reactions requires a gap, seeking ambivalence.

The narrator's voice becomes increasingly more collective as the chapter progresses, as we are told of neighbors' speculations about *Singley's* trip to London. A crescendo of

<sup>12</sup> I am using this term in the Bakhtinian sense of "an attitude that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactical) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it the silences, the speech manners, the styles, the 'languages,' the conscious and sublingual belief systems" (198, 194).

quasiy voices both silence and produces a report about the large number of ladies Singlet will purportedly bring to the ball. When Singlet at last appears at the ball, however, it turns out he has only brought "his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man." The appearance of the latter is followed by "the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having lost thousands a year." Each of the groups present, "the gentlemen" and "the ladies," then speak in one voice: "The gentleman pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr Singlet, and he was looked at with great admiration for half the evening" (PP, 10). When Derry fails to dance with any lady, or to speak to anyone, outside his own party, "his character was decided. He was the proudest, most disappointed man in the whole world, and everybody hoped he would never come again" (PP, 12). Thus we see how the progressive incision of more voices in reported utterances leads the narrator to ironically assume the collective voice ("everybody")<sup>12</sup> passing judgment on Derry. This narrative irony is evident in the change in collective appraisals of Derry's appearance, from approval

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<sup>12</sup>Thus presence of a collective voice is, according to Bakhtin, "especially characteristic of comic style in which someone else's speech is dominant..." Bakhtin astutely uses Dickens' *Little Dorrit* to provide examples of this hybrid construction in which "current opinion" mingles with "authorial speech." It is interesting to note in these examples the incidence of the words "everybody" and "nobody," which appear to function as markers of the collective voice (cf. Bakhtin, *ib.*, 187-8).

influenced by the report of his losses, to condemnation (his "having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance") reached as soon as he is "discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased" (FP, 10). But the narrator, though here inviting the reader to laugh at this inconsistency, will later on endorse the reproach to Barry for his excessive pride, so that the community's collective voice, ascending from numerous a willingness to accept efforts to please them, will be partially vindicated.

An examination of Barry's relations to others can shed light on the narrator's attitudes toward the community. There are three issues involved in the antipathy between Barry and the Scrymgeour neighborhood, and they are related to three areas of social configurations: social class, gender, and the conflict between London and provincial, rural communities. Barry's entrance into the assembly hall creates a connection because he is both sexually attractive and socially desirable. His manners and income make him highly likely to have that ultimate status symbol for the rural gentry, a house in London. However, his behavior soon causes him to be generally detested because he is seen to be unapproachable, which in turn is due to his hauteur, his contempt for the gathering. "It was an assembly as this," he tells Singley, drawing "would be inseparable" (FP, 11).

Barry's failings end, for the first half of the novel, unappreciated. Mrs. Mount is sure he thinks "the country is

nothing at all" (PP, 43). Elizabeth considers him a man who, if forced to enter such a middle class sector of London as Graceschurch Street, where the Gardiners live, "would hardly think a month's visitance enough to distance him from his acquaintances" (PP, 141). Darcy will later show himself to be above such ordinary, as she will have overcome such feelings, after Elizabeth's rejection changes him, for he will be very civil to the Gardiners. But he is indeed guilty of considering himself above Elizabeth, both as man and as her social superior, as will be evident in his mode of proposing to her. As he admits, he has struggled to repress his love for her because the "condition in life" of her relations is "decidedly beneath my own" (PP, 121); as he proposes to her, "This counterpane" expresses "real security" that she will accept him (PP, 124), for his vanity has convinced him that she can only feel flattered by his love (PP, 124).

These flaws in Darcy's character become evident not only in his relationship with Elizabeth, when she rejects him, but also in his relations of concrete wrongdoing toward Wickham and Jane and Bingley will prove to be largely unfounded, but she is right when she accuses him of arrogance and conceit, of "selfish doubts of the feelings of others" (PP, 122). Darcy's real failing, then, lies in his failure to enter into community with others, in his individualistic family pride. He will later confess to Elizabeth that his parents had spoiled him, that they "allowed, encouraged, almost taught us to be selfish

and overbearing, to care far more beyond my own family circle, to think merely of all the rest of the world" (FF, 348), although his pride is partly based on his social class and family tradition,<sup>12</sup> the main one which he is consistently reproached throughout the novel is his failure to "extend himself" to relate to others (cf. FF, 112). The stance he adopts during a married party is emblematic of his attitude vis-à-vis his fellow beings: he stands off alone, not, like Mr. Bantam,<sup>13</sup> in order to laugh at others, but in order to pass judgment on them "in silent indignation" (FF, 219). By stressing Barry's failure to connect with others, then, the novel seems to be emphasizing the importance of community as the proper context for personal behavior. Yet the collective or social reality which the novel upholds is not the force of traditions or the strength of class as established moral structures, which discriminate and exclude; rather, it is

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<sup>12</sup>It is this characteristic of Barry's character that is most stressed by some critics. See, for example, Michael Dockworth presents him as a defender of "the norms by which we have lived for generations" and which "are in danger of neglect and destruction" (cf. *The Improvement of the Fruits*, pp. 187-212.)

<sup>13</sup>As it has been repeatedly said, Mr. Bantam's retreat from parental responsibility into cynical nihilism is one of the ways in which the novel makes a statement regarding everyone's social duties and accountability. See Julia Frawitt Brown on Mr. Bantam's "epistemic blindness" (Jane Austen's *Novels*, p. 754); also Michael Dockworth on Mr. Bantam's "chronic freedom from social commitment" (*The Improvement of the Fruits*, p. 189). Even Maria Radich, though viewing Mr. Bantam's cynicism partly as the tyranny of social norms that make divorce impossible, refers to this character's self-enclosure as "his own irreconcilable fall" ("Folly as Discrimination," p. 38).

utopian human relations, the monk-like bond of the soul with others (at least with all others and my best usually), regardless of worldly distinctions, that seems to be at play here.

In contrast to Darcy, Elizabeth occasionally shows her awareness of the importance of establishing a sense of community with others. Even while laughing at conventions, as we have seen, she upholds the need to observe them in as much as they serve a bonding function; in this sense she shares Cardinal's "universal spirit," which is "a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part" (209, 7). She possesses a sense of the experience of collectivity, but she tends to think in terms of what "would be better for the neighbourhood" (27, 178).<sup>12</sup> At another point it is Mrs Gardiner who shows regional allegiance ("I should be sorry," she says to Elizabeth, "to think ill of a young man who has lived as long in

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<sup>12</sup>This typical Austenian emphasis on the importance of viewing allegiance to a community should not be misunderstood as identical to the idealization of country life that was a commonplace in eighteenth-century literature. As Frank Bradbrook observes, Austen shows a more balanced view of the relative merits of London and country life than Melmoth or Cooper. Thus, while a novel like *Mansfield Park* accuses the country, talking of Elizabeth's "country town indifference to decorum," an ignorance like Mrs Bennett believes London has no other advantage over the country than the shops and public places. A more sensible position is that shown by *Persuasion*, who sees that country and capital have each their advantages (although he "and, like all sensible people in Jane Austen, by settling and settling in the country"---cf. FRANK BRADBROOK, *Jane Austen and Her Predecessors*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 18-21.)



Derbyshire"), while Elizabeth, angry at Harry for his supposed mistreatment of Wickham, and at Fitzlyon for his apparent neglect of her sister, Jane, reproaches herself "high" at "young men who live in Derbyshire" and of "their intimate friends who live in Hertfordshire." For this speech she is rebuked by Mrs Gardiner (EP, 180-4). As we shall discuss below, it is precisely her tendency to trust her own perceptions of others too rapidly, trusting herself against understanding other people's motives, that leads her into error. Her class, therefore, now, like Harry's, aims against community.

Fitzlyon, Elizabeth, in spite of her occasional (but serious) lapses from a more communitarian attitude, boldly shows her identification with her neighborhood by her use of unpretentious, homespun speech, especially when confronted with the high and mighty. Thus, she replies a colloquialist-like in response to the news of the arrival of Miss de Bourgh: "I expected at least that the pigs were got into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter!" (EP, 178). Again, she quotes a barely proverb to Harry's face, soon after she notices his listening to her conversation with others at a party. Elizabeth defies what she takes to be his contempt by replying to him "a fine old saying which every body here is of course familiar with--'Keep your breath to

and your partridge" (FF, 14).<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth finds the loyalty to her community that is characteristic of people used to life in a country village. Her "attachment to Hertfordshire" is recognized by Farcy: It is a mark of his London provincialism that he considers it a compliment to suggest that Elizabeth has no right "to such a very strong local attachment," redundantly adding she is too superior to "have been always at Langbourn" (cf. FF, 178-9.)<sup>13</sup> For Elizabeth, it is not really a question whether strong bonds to a community are good or bad: it is, rather, that they are unavoidable.

Of course, the novel is far from always showing sympathy towards the collective voice, towards "every body": nothing could be further from Austen than a romantic idealization of any group of people. The entire series of episodes involving Wickham seems especially designed to discredit that *non grata*, which is no wonder in showing Farcy that Elizabeth can

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<sup>12</sup>These two passages have been interpreted as individualistic "marks of liminarian boldness and unconventionality" on the part of Elizabeth. For she uses "words that can elsewhere carry the stigma of ignorance or vulgarity" (Korean Note, *The Language of Jane Austen*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 270. I think one is obviously held in having such a stigma, but it must not be forgotten that she is doing so by employing, precisely, unpretentious, colloquial language, and on occasions when she is in the presence of "disgraced ingenuitism" and pride that would scorn such language as "poverty."

<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth's prejudice against Farcy does not allow her to understand what he seems to praise, and so she merely looks surprised. Even if she had understood him, however, she would hardly have considered such a patronizing remark a compliment.

truthfully say, "Every body [in Hertfordshire] is disgusted with his pride" (PP, 74). When Wickham circulates his story of the evil Darcy has done him, "every body was pleased to think how much they had disliked Mr Darcy before they had known any thing of the matter," (PP, 138). It is this same group that is consisted of Wickham, who, as Mr Bennet later will say "seems love to us all" (PP, 130). When Darcy's letter reveals Wickham's evil deeds, Elizabeth is forced to recognize that she was wrong in his defense "he was substantially good, that the general approbation of the neighbourhood, and the regard which his social powers had gained in the same" (PP, 144). After Wickham and Lydia elope, the ironic public will turn totally against him, as his many creditors began to suspect he will not pay his debts: "All Hertford seemed striving to witness the man, who, but three months before, had been almost an angel of light." He again encounters this character that so often appears in this novel, "every body": "Every body declared that he was the wickedest young man in the world; and every body began to find out, that they had always distrusted the appearance of his goodness" (PP, 144-45). This collective character, then, is blind to the faults of those who flatter it, implacable against those who provoke its resentment, and quite ready to distrust itself in order not to face up to its own mistakes.

"Every body" is simply another name for that omnipresent "they," the "neighbours," the "country," an entity

whose opinion is powerful enough, on one occasion, to move Elizabeth to oppose Lydia's plan of walking in Meryton the same afternoon the sisters arrive from a trip: "It should not be said, that the Miss Bennets would not be at home half a day before they were in pursuit of the assurance" (PP, 121). Elizabeth's fear of the generalized surveillance by members of the community shows the effective social control. The same group of people whose gossip is feared will rejoice when evil befalls the Bennet family in the form of Lydia's elopement, Elizabeth suggests; therefore they should offer no condolences: "Let them triumph over us at a distance, and be satisfied" (PP, 150). Thus she ironically deflates the seriousness of the tragic event, defeating the fear of, in Jane's words, "the horror of what might happen" to Lydia (PP, 152); she also associates the satisfaction many people feel when others suffer misfortune. In a verbal thrashing the narrator likewise describes the "pitiful old ladies in Meryton" reacting with glee to the news of Lydia's marriage to Wickham, "because with such a husband, her misery was considered certain" (PP, 155). By turning the gossiping old ladies into grotesque monsters, Austen achieves the typical sentimental triumph: "All that was frightening in ordinary life is turned into sewing or delicious nonsense" (MCM, 57).

The transformation of fear into laughter, it is true, does not obliterate the "monsters." In spite of the neighbors' surveillance and intrusion, however, which can be seen as

another indication of the applicability of Foucaultian concepts to Austen's narratives, it would be a mistake to attempt to explain Austen's complex view of human collectivity solely by applying Foucault's discussion of the "panopticon."<sup>28</sup> Her community does not only have the micro-distribution of power through vigilant social control; it is, rather, existentially ambivalent. Both the site of generalized struggle and the domain for self-realization, growth and intimacy. As said above, both *Emma*'s and *Elizabeth*'s lives relate to one against the community, showing the novel's approval of an attitude of openness to others. Furthermore, *Pride and Prejudice* can be shown to endorse an attitude of Christian humility: most of us are quite ready to see faults in others, but very reluctant to admit them in ourselves. Thus, to feel one's own's neighbors is a temptation that must be avoided. Elizabeth's *Widow* will be a lesson in the idea that, vulgar and irrelevantly inexpressible as the easy-headed woman, the *Carry*, often seems, can say occasionally have to admit that one is not fully exempt from the shortcomings.

#### THE CHANGING OF LIVES

Community bonds, nevertheless, tend to be bonds of war. Beyond the fierce competition among families with carriage-

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<sup>28</sup>Such maverickness is another indication of the applicability of Foucault's concept of the panopticon to some aspects of Austen's narratives (cf. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*).

this daughter, conflict constitutes much of the fabric of social intercourse. And of course, this strife is conducted mainly in the arena of gender and social class. In addition to the conflicting views on women we discussed above (see pp. 188-89), the novel reveals the struggle that underlies much of the process of social interaction. The most intense and most central social conflict in the novel is that between characters with connections to "trade," meaning those who work for their money or who have relatives who do so, and characters belonging to families who for generations have held large estates. Elizabeth Bennet's status is ambiguous, for her father belongs to the second group, while her mother belongs to the first, since in her family there are two attorneys (much to Miss Bingley's unrelieved satisfaction [cf. pp. 34-71]). Darcy and his aunt, Lady Catherine, on the other hand, belong to the second group. The conflicts among these three characters represent the central points in the evolution of the plot; our sympathies as readers seem to be directed by the narrator toward the values of the working middle class, and against the aristocratic emphasis on nobility of birth.

Among the most interesting manifestations of social conflicts in the novel we find the aristocratic efforts of people whose fortunes originated in trade in the past, but who have now expressed the values of the 1840s. Thus, for instance, Sir William Lucas' knightly conviction that he cannot remain in trade, and moves him to feel "disquiet" toward "his business

and his residence in a small market town," both of which he soon gives up to settle in lower lodges, "where he could think with pleasure of his own importance" (FF, 181). Similarly, Miss Ringier and Mrs Harriet wished to forget that "their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade" (FF, 182). These two elegant ladies are somewhat ironic, who "would have had difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable" (FF, 181). The man in question is Mr Gardiner, Mrs Harriet's brother; he and his wife constitute living proof of that "evidence of mind" which the novel presents in opposition to the social distinction of "people of fashion." Mr Gardiner, aside from working for a living, has a lifestyle in many ways indistinguishable from that of those who look down upon him. This fact is hard to believe for someone like Lady Catherine, who expresses her surprise when Elizabeth Bennet informs her that Mr Gardiner "keeps a man-servant" (FF, 212).

One interesting aspect in this novel's treatment of social relationships as bonded war lies in the ways in which conflict is inscribed in the language of everyday interaction. That war is a generalized reality in social interaction is recognized by the principal characters and by the narrator herself, for they all consistently use the language of war to refer to linguistic exchanges. Thus, for instance, one of the most common words used to refer to a character's effort to

may another character's opinion, or to obtain information or a commission<sup>41</sup> from another character, is "attack," as we have seen, the Bengt ladies "attacked [Mr Bengt] in various ways," when trying to get him to describe Mr Ringley. On a visit to Wetherfield, Lydia addresses Ringley in a "wadded attack" reminding him of his promise to give a ball (pt. IV, 48). Miss Ringley's account of Wickham's relations to and dealings with the Bury family is called by Elizabeth "a pretty attack" that cannot influence her opinion. And when Miss Ringley, jealous of Bury's attentions to Elizabeth, wishes to offend her, she takes thinly veiled comments about Elizabeth's effusive-crazy sisters and the removal of the militia from Meryton; Elizabeth must exert "herself vigorously to repel the ill-natured attack" (IV, 249).<sup>42</sup> Mrs Bennet often "attacks" her daughters, as she does Elizabeth to get her to accept Collins' marriage proposal (IV, 112). More innocently and unfeelingly, she vents her disappointment in Ringley's failure to return with "assistance" on Jane

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<sup>41</sup>I am using the term in the sense of a speech act as defined by John Searle as "illocution by which 'we commit ourselves to doing things' (cf. "A Taxonomy of Speech Acts," in *Expression and Meaning* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], p. 35).

<sup>42</sup>Ly. S. Friedson sees a resemblance between that visit and a social battle: "Notice that the positions of the people in the drawing room are well certain, where Elizabeth like a frog sits her to run between the lines." Furthermore, "What is of [Basset] as a war-movieist, forced by the Napoleonic wars, knowing directly of prize money, the shortage of men, the economic crisis and change in the value of capital" (*George Meredith and English Society*, [New York: Random House, 1970], p. 78).



demanding her confession that "if he did not come back, she should think herself very ill used" (PP, 129). In addition to "attack," a partial list of words related to martial arts often used in the novel to describe verbal and other forms of social interaction would include "defy," (PP, 24, 82), "voluntary" (PP, 41), "provoked" (PP, 51), "dispute" (PP, 11), "suspicious," "suspicious" (PP, 102), "combated" (PP, 142), "triumph" (PP, 4), 149, 155, 155, 161, 177), "challenge," "conquer," "indignities" (PP, 174, 187), "fight" (PP, 187), "subalt," "revoked" (PP, 184).

Not are the uses of martial language confined to hostile relationships. Social and romantic interactions are referred to with a profusion of military terms, that tend to trivialize war as they stress the omnipresence of conflict. Thus, for instance, Elizabeth dresses herself for the Featherfield ball in preparation "for the conquest of all that remained untroubled of [Richard's] heart, trusting it was no more than could win in the course of the evening" (PP, 78; emphasis added). Friendship and love are sometimes at war with each other: thus, Elizabeth fears that "the influence of [Bingley's] friends," who have tried to keep him away from Jane, might be "successfully combated by the more natural influence of Jane's attractions" (PP, 112). Again, Mr. Darcy jokingly congratulates Elizabeth "as a very important conquest" when Collins' father relates gossip about Darcy's interest in Elizabeth (PP, 182).

Barry hostilities in  Pride and Prejudice, rather than being limited to adversaries, become even more prevalent between intimates, for intimacy provides information that can be used against one's friends. Thus, Elizabeth tells Miss Bingley that she has the means of retaliating against Barry after he has made an "abominable" speech about certain common feminine motivations: "We can all please and punish one another. Scorn him--laugh at him--imitate as you are, you must know how it is to be done" (PP, 87). The novel also insinuates on the generalized war based on everyone's desire to be proven right in his/her appraisal of everyday situations. Only someone as readily benevolent as Jane can think that her sister's love for her will prevent her "triumphing in her better judgment at my expense," even Elizabeth proves right about Miss Bingley (PP, 146). Elizabeth, on the contrary, recognizes that Barry would

triumph . . . could he know that the proposals which she had proudly spurned only four months ago, would now have been gladly and gratefully received! He was as generous, she thought not, as the most generous of his sex. But while he was mortal, there must be triumph (PP, 311-12).

Although it is generalized, war is most intense when sexual and social forces collide. The two most violent battles in the novel occur when Barry first proposes to Elizabeth, and when Lady Catherine visits Elizabeth to dissuade her from marrying Barry. From a linguistic viewpoint, however, the most interesting of these two verbal confrontations is the second one, the one between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine.

This lady uses discursive weapons that are commonwealth to what she represents all the most negative aspects of worldly power. She adds an overbearing personality, built upon her habit of commanding, patronizing and intimidating her inferiors, to her excessive reliance on the weight of a noble family, status, money, and a large estate as basis for her claims to her regards of others.<sup>4</sup> This lady's language, her rage, are symptomatic of the gulf that still remained between the aristocracy and some segments of the middle classes. As a person "connected to trade," Elizabeth is considered by Lady

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<sup>4</sup>Critics have found in this passage evidence of the contrastation between Hursey's Cecilia and Mrs. Melville (cf. G. S. Laurie, p. 74) while others have recognized Austen's debts to Hursey and the differences between the two (cf., for instance, Frank Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries*, p. 88). Other critics have pointed out similarities between this episode and the clash between Richardson's Pamela and Lady Devereux (cf. Joseph Harris, *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], p. 41; one may also trace in the dialogue between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth strong influences of the dialogue between Charlotte Smith's Cecilia and Lady Monteville. The latter's description as "accustomed to undiminished power in her own family" and as expecting "from every body an acquaintance as total as she got from her tradesmen and servants" could be applied to Lady Catherine, who, following Austen's customary style, is shown acting in this manner rather than described as such. The lady's insults, threats and boasts and her insistence ["I will bear no objections!"] are very similar to Lady Catherine's treatment of Emma's reply, when Lady Monteville accuses her of lying to conceal her knowledge of Selam's whereabouts ("II, however, I did know, it is not such a secret, Madam, that should compel me to give any information,") could be a predecessor of Elizabeth's response to Lady Catherine's importunate questions. "But you are not entitled to know [my concerns]; you will such behavior as this ever induce me to be explicit." Finally, in both meetings it is the young lady who cuts the dialogue when she feels insulted (cf. pp. 114-5, and *Emilia*, Vol. II, Ch. 11, pp. 134-5). Elizabeth, however, never breaks as Cecilia "hardly able to stand," as Emilia does at the beginning.

Catherine's superiority of her nephew, Percy, whom she wants to marry her daughter; she cannot abide to see those two "divided" by "the upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune." Stressing the superiority of her ancient family (and Percy's), Lady Catherine tries to convince Elizabeth that her marriage to Percy would be a marriage beneath (PP, 116-8). In this confrontation with Elizabeth at the latter's home, Longbourn, Lady Catherine's behavior nicely underlines the patronizing, condescending importance she has already shown towards the Collinses and their guests and towards the villagers she presides over at her estate, Rosings (cf. PP, 148-16, 213-4).

The confrontation reaches its climax when, after Lady Catherine's many insults, threats and accusations, she changes her demand to reject Percy to a demand that Elizabeth confess that she is "resolved to have him." This Elizabeth will not admit, asserting only her right to pursue her own happiness<sup>14</sup> "without reference to you, or to any person so wholly unconnected with us." Thus she rejects the lady's claims of the supremacy of family and superior birth. And yet Elizabeth's position, though infused with the revolutionary spirit of rationalism, is not fully individualistic to the

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<sup>14</sup>As Claudia Johnson observes, "in keeping with the liberal tradition of moral philosophy to which *Pride and Prejudice* is affiliated, happiness is considered one of the characters that they have a moral right to." Indeed, "as all of Austen's novels, but especially *Pride and Prejudice*, pursuing happiness is the business of life." (Claudia Johnson, *DATA.AUSTEN*, pp. 81, 88.)

charge that the marriage will make Fanny "the contempt of the world," the young lady's reply is not an expression of readiness to have such contempt in reasonable measure of the sufficiency of love. Rather, she insists that "the world in general will have too much sense to join in the scorn [shown by Fanny's family]."<sup>18</sup>

In summary, Elizabeth uses irony and reason as her representative weapons in defense of her personal dignity, while Lady Catherine appeals to the power of rank and the established claims of family and age, attempting to force her interlocutor to comply to her demands by means of intimidation. Thus we may say that the discursive tools employed by each represent the positive qualities of the first and the faults of the latter, who embodies what is most unpleasant and reprehensible about the exercise of social power.

*Pride and Prejudice* presents a complex view of society, in which strong bonds among people in a community appear as the unavoidable context for interpersonal relationships. These bonds seem to be conceived more as an attitude of openness to whether fellowship<sup>19</sup> to be preserved than as an idealization of the actual virtues of country life or English culture. Paradoxically, one of the strongest bonds among people is their common share of language, customs and customs,

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<sup>18</sup>None of the moral reasons for the need to preserve such an attitude of openness will become clear in the discussion of Elizabeth's development.

which contains a form of social interaction that can be described as institutionalized, sorry warfare. This war is inscribed in language and in the rules for social behaviour. Furthermore, the narrator's involved tone and the ironic voice of the protagonist show a festive awareness of the human failings that country communities often exhibit. In fact, such failings are sometimes comically, grotesquely exaggerated and mocked.

Similarly, the "villainess" in the novel, Lady Catherine, turns out to be more ridiculous than intimidating, in spite of all her near-feudal social and economic power. This lady uses power to dominate others while pretending to protect them. The fictional universe in *Pride and Prejudice*, however, contains a realm of beneficent use of power, a small utopian community in which the old oppressive order has died and the world has been reborn. This world is a domain of abundance and excellence, seen from the perspective of servants and the socially despised, where masters are judged by their dependents and dedicated to their service, where matrimony is forbidden, where wives laugh at their husbands as freely and fearlessly as they could laugh at themselves, where cynicism becomes excusable, and where community bonds thrive. The story of this world's victory is also the story of Elizabeth's growth to maturity.

### Elizabeth's Stagnation

The seeds of this beautiful utopian world are present from the start, though they begin to germinate only in the third volume, and fructify in the conclusion. In order to understand how this utopia is achieved, we must approach the process of the heroine's development from the perspective of her initial strengths and failings.

#### Elizabeth's Utopian Beginnings

While MORCHAMBEAU AINSIE describes a world full of imperfections that are largely overcome in its utopian ending, in Trida and Frolindia we find utopian elements from the beginning. As Claudia Johnson observes, "Trida and Frolindia is a categorically happy novel, and its felicity is not merely incidental, something that happens at the end of the novel, but is rather at some the premise and its prize."<sup>26</sup> From the start, the very climate of the Barrett household shows some utopian elements due to its patriarch's de facto abdication of many of his prerogatives and to the Barrett parents' lack of authoritarianism, the "unmarked neglect" they show toward their daughters. Their parental "laissez-faire" attitude, although excessive in the case of Kitty and Lydia,<sup>27</sup> has

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<sup>26</sup>Claudia Johnson, Imm. Justice, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup>It is significant that, when Mr Barrett is criticized for his neglect of parental duties, it is not done as censure of his abdication of authority, but in terms of his "breach of conjugal obligation" in continually ridiculing his wife in front of his daughters (vol. IV, 196).

contributed to make the protagonist's character bold and independent, and must have had some influence in the formation of her unconventional wit. The fact that she has been allowed to "run on in [a] wild manner . . . at home," as her mother puts it, has made her unconvention(al) and original. Thus she is, in Kingsley's words, a "studier of character" (at. 29, 42) who appears to be no respecter of persons.

Elizabeth's habits of furtive, sneaking observation and analysis of the behavior of others place her in a arena outside of established social categories. She is not bound by "the mere stabilizers of money and rank": it would take "extraordinary talents or strenuous virtue" to make her feel "trepidation" (29, 140). Nor is she properly subservive before male greatness. While Miss Kingsley drows upon Harry, hoping to marry him, Elizabeth challenges and laughs at his otherwise she can. As she will later tell Harry, "my behavior to you was at least always bordering on the unbecom'" (29, 144).

Furthermore, she does not show respectful acquiescence before her elders: as Lady Catherine declares, "you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person." When she laughs at Lady Catherine's inquisitiveness, refusing to answer her questions, this lady is astonished: "Elizabeth expected herself to be the first creature who had ever dared to triffl[e] with so much dignified impertinence" (29, 140-1). Elizabeth's determination not to give upon men and to think for herself, her penchant for laughter, her disregard for "fashions"



decorous (shown, for instance, in the cross-country trek that reduces her petticoats), all make her a reticenedietic version of the "disorderly woman" who nevertheless preserves high standards of dignity. This character does not even respect the clergy, for she, like her father and the novel's narrator, repeatedly laughs at Collins' absurd and contradictory mixture of humility and posturingness, nowhere as evident as in his view of the clerical profession ("I consider the clerical office," Collins tells her, "as equal in point of dignity with the highest rank in the kingdom--provided a proper humility of behavior is at the same time maintained"--*PP*, 17). Indeed, Bakhtin's words describing satirical laughter can be applied to Elizabeth, for she also distrusts "the serious tone" and feels "confidence in the truth of laughter," which eliminates fear and opposes dogmatic, official truth" (*MD*, 18). It is her propensity to laugh at every absurdity, even when shown by those who appear to be above her, that places her in the utopian realm of carnival laughter, which "offered a completely different, counterposed, antipodalized and antipolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations," building "a second world and a second life outside officialness. . . ." (*MD*, 21).

#### Elizabeth's Monologic Fallings

Nevertheless, sometimes Elizabeth's attitude falls short of carnivalesque utopian equality and universal profanation, for she judges others too hastily and trusts her own

impressions too kindly, clinging to her misperceptions. The stoical spirit of festive laughter, according to Bakhtin, "breasted no danger and could not become authoritarian" (1981, 88); Elizabeth, on the other hand, sometimes seems to be in danger of trusting the authority of her own impressions too much. Of course, her independence of mind and joyful wit are admirable; our sympathies as readers are directed in favor of her intelligence and strength of personality. As Susan Sorges puts it, "Elizabeth's freedom is basically the freedom to think for herself."<sup>41</sup> But precisely because she knows the power of her intelligence, she is susceptible to making mistakes. In the words of Andrew S. Wright, "Elizabeth's prejudice stems from a pride in her own perceptions." She shares with Darcy both this power and this liability. Wright argues that it is, ironically, because of their "deep perceptions" that both are "subject to fallacies of perception."<sup>42</sup> I believe in this novel it becomes clear that everyone is occasionally subject to such fallacies, whether or not their intelligence is superior like Elizabeth's or Darcy's.

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<sup>41</sup>Susan Sorges, *In the Romantic Chamber and Paragonian in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice** (University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 84.

<sup>42</sup>Andrew S. Wright, "Heroines, Heroes and Villains in *Pride and Prejudice*," in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of *Pride and Prejudice**, ed. S. Bakewell (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 87-88.

As we shall see, the significance of this novel's shortcomings is not limited to the humbling of two individuals, but refers us to the devaluation of the heroic dignity of socialistic leaders. Nevertheless, on a psychological level, Crime and Punishment is the story of their overcoming, their humbling as they realize that they are liable to make the same mistakes other, more vulgar souls make, and for very similar reasons. Fundamentally, their moral and intellectual advantage consists precisely in the ability to face this humiliation and ultimately accept it.

Although both characters will undergo similar humiliations, during the first half of the novel it is Raskolnikov's fallings that we focus on. For we not only follow much of the action through the eyes of Elizabeth Bostov: the narrator also tends to appraise people and events from a perspective very close to the protagonist's. A look into the relations between Elizabeth's voice, her consciousness, and the narrator's utterances will allow us to reflect on the novel's attitude to such epistemological questions as the possibility of verities and the conditions affecting perception, questions that are basic to an understanding of Elizabeth's personal development.

Even before Elizabeth appears in the novel, we are placed in a perspective very close to hers. At sunset, for example, is presented in a more favorable light in Volume I, chapter I (p. 3), than he is at the end of the second volume. In the

earlier passage, he is only said to be "odd" and "eccentric," and the contrast to his wife's "warm understanding, little information and uncertain temper" makes him appear so advantage. In the later passage, we are made to reflect on the consequences of his shortcomings at a time when Elizabeth is forced by events to overcome her partiality as her father's favorite. She then dwells on the thought that, in comparing at his wife before their daughter and exposing her "to the contempt of her own children" he has neglected his conjugal and parental duties; Elizabeth "had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the union of so unequal a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from an ill-judged a direction of talents. . . [PP. 224-5]. If Elizabeth finds these disadvantages more strongly "egg," it is not only because Lydia has been behaving more more wildly, or Kitty more peevishly; it is also because she has herself undergone a transformation. At Hunsford Parsonage, after discovering she has been unfair to Jerry, she has changed, and is now more likely to be aware of how her own gratitude may have influenced her desire to "banish from her thoughts" her father's faults. Since the narrative follows her mental processes, we as readers also see those faults more clearly after this point than we had before.

The reader's closeness to Elizabeth is also based on the considerable similarity between the narrator's voice and Elizabeth's style of speech and thought. As Lloyd W. Brown

observes, "It is Elizabeth herself whose personality and style pervade the tone of *Frank and Jesse*." Indeed, the novel's protagonist is given so pronounced a voice that even very similar to the narrator's "epigrammatic summaries of character and situation." For example, in terms that recall one of the narratorial descriptions of Mrs. Bennett in the first chapter, of Collins Elizabeth will say that he "is a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man, . . ." (FF, 135). In addition to such judgments, Elizabeth's style and the narrator's also share a certain degree of bias, what Lloyd Brown calls their "winking invasion of traditional values."<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth not only obviously reads Lucy's poems with self-importance; she is also "impatient" with conventions and authority, as she shows, for example, when she counters her father's novel-like portrayal of Jane being wooed with suitors at age fifteen, observing that poetry is most efficacious "in driving away love" (FF, 48).

In spite of the nearness of her general stance to the narrator's irony, Elizabeth at times seems in danger of falling into her father's individualistic, negatively satiric stance. Thus, for instance, she protests that to find Lucy agreeable would be even greater discomfort than to continue to find reason to hate him: "'To find a man agreeable when one is determined to hate him: 'To find a man agreeable when one is determined to hate him: he set with us such an evil'" (FF, 44, 50). The heroine has proved herself far paradoxer again,

<sup>22</sup>Lloyd W. Brown, *Life of Lucy*, p. 121-2.

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when her disappointment in Wickham and Jane's in Singley leads her to rejoice she'll soon be in the company of Colonel Fitzroy and are the only ones worth knowing after all" (PP, 134).

Elizabeth's tone is generally assertive, but her confidence in her own judgment will come to seem excessive. Faced with contradictory reports about the dealings between Wickham and Darcy, for example, Elizabeth retreats to her mother's expression of distress, "she does not know what to think," with a confident, "I beg your pardon--one knows exactly what to think" (PP, 84). Similarly, Elizabeth will treat "the idea of [Singley's] returning no more . . . with the utmost contempt" (PP, 100). And yet "the idea" will prove correct, and what she knew "exactly" will turn out to be false. For Elizabeth fails to take into consideration what the narrator of  Pride and Prejudice . . . For all her self-confident wit and perceptiveness, never forgets: that our views of people and events are too often colored by our sympathies or antipathies, our gratitude or resentment, our wants and needs.<sup>11</sup> The narrator often seems to endorse

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<sup>11</sup>In spite of its seeming objectivity, the first person plural is generalizations, with its presumption of universal equality, may be justified when the topic is the relativity of perceptions and judgments. "Our" perceptions are all influenced by our personal situations: one's gender, class, generation, nationality, political allegiance, etc.; color one's lenses and are refracted through one's speech, but no one can escape the influence of these multiple determinations, as one dare or another. On the other hand, no one can escape the force of "contingency," homogenizing forces either.

Elizabeth's judgment of people, as it happens when Jane has a more favorable impression of Wingley's sisters than Elizabeth's:

. . . with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgment too unassailed by any attention to herself, [Elizabeth] was very little disposed to approve them. They were in fact very fine ladies; not deficient in good humor when they were pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable when they chose it; but proud and conceited. (PP, 18)

We observe here almost the same "firmity of utterance" that one critic attributes to Elizabeth's interventions in dialogue.<sup>10</sup> And yet the narrating voice suggests that Elizabeth's stringent judgment was not only based on her greater "quickness of perception," but also on her having been "less assailed by any attention to herself" to like Miss Wingley.<sup>11</sup> (This statement will be highlighted once a libretto, because of the jealousy and rivalry Miss Wingley will develop towards Elizabeth.)

In the novel progression, such narratorial statements ironically relating a character's views to his/her interests or attractions, and then relativizing such views, become more prevalent, while direct addresses to the reader in a seemingly

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<sup>10</sup>Yves Morin, *M. J. Collins Considered* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>The implication, of course, is that Jane had been assailed by observations from Miss Wingley. Again, we see that even the friendly attention a person may receive from one acquaintance can be described in military terms as an "assaulting." This evaluation leads us to even greater awareness of the pervading presence of war in the novel's universe.



authoritative tone becomes less frequent and less definitive.<sup>24</sup> The narrative voice is often charged with an irony that gives its statements, in the words of Julia Freadt Brown, "a limning ambiguity": "The narrative voice, then, provides some limit, some barrier, which the action strives consistently (and successfully) to overcome. The narrator's provision of certitude, despite its accuracy, is temporary."<sup>25</sup>

It is typical of this narrator that she will qualify what would otherwise seem to be decisive declarations by adding words such as "perhaps" that turn assertions into statements of probability. For instance, when Richard begins to court Maria Elg immediately after she inherits a fortune, the narrator attributes Elizabeth's reaction to her regard for him, but turns her own appraisal into a probabilistic judgment. When Mrs Gardiner seems dubious about Richard's attitude, Elizabeth defends him, "Frey, my dear aunt, what is the difference in matrimonial affairs between the prudent and the necessary action?" Elizabeth has surely condemned Charlotte for her necessary marriage, has even reproached Jane for yielding herself, out of friendship, to Charlotte's

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<sup>24</sup>With regard to the ambiguity or irony, it seems fruitful to remember Jane Austen's paradox between irony and silence, since irony, when it is positive rather than negative and bitterly satirical, is spoken "with reservations," aimed at lessening domestic, authoritarian culture's ironic laughter which is traversed the tendency to speak in probabilities. (C. BARKIN, "From Roman Road to 1874-1," in *Speech-Search*, pp. 112-4.)

<sup>25</sup>Julia Freadt Brown, *Jane Austen's Novels*, pp. 65-67.

unprincipled decision: "You shall not defend her, though it be Charlotte Lucas" (cf. IV, 175-6). And yet Elizabeth likes Wickham too well to apply the same principle to him. As the narrator observes, "Elizabeth, less deeply-affected perhaps in his case than to Charlotte's, did not quarrel with him for his wish of independence" (IV, 176—emphasis added).<sup>12</sup> Moral principle, the text seems to say, may be worthy, but when individuals apply it, they may never be sure of their own motivations and perceptions. (Skeptical about judgments about custom also would logically extend to the narrator's own statements. In the end, the reader may feel that, in spite of initial appearances, in spite of the narrator's seeming endorsement of the view that to condemn Charlotte's decision is to be "dear-sighted," there was considerable more justification for Charlotte's marriage than for Wickham's courtship the new heiress, for the former has no other "provision" to choose from, while the latter has wasted several opportunities to make a livelihood.)

However, it is not only Elizabeth whose judgment is often influenced by her affections. Relativism becomes more and more evident the further we get into the novel, not only in the necessary judgments made by "every body," on the basis of

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<sup>12</sup>It is significant that the narrator is proposing that Elizabeth's display of perception may be compromised by her wishes for Wickham, and thus apparently recommending the strict application of a moral position, which should be used to judge both Charlotte and Wickham with the same severity; and yet, she recognizes her own fallibility by the use of a probabilistic word such as "perhaps."

Barry's income or Elizabeth's debts. In  *Pride and Prejudice* it is recognized that, as Mr Bennet tells Elizabeth, "human nature is too prone" to forget its own guilt. Its own humbling (PP, 388). Often, partial, prejudiced mental processes are not just conceptually restricted, but *emotionally*, almost *visceral*, motivated, and not described as culpable. Charlotte, for instance, moved by sincere love for her friend Elizabeth, hopes she might marry Barry's cousin, the rich Fitzwilliam. Immediately, however, the narrator hints that Charlotte's self-interest leads her to reflect that it would be better if it were Barry who would propose to Elizabeth, in spite of the cousin's personal "advantages," for "Mr Barry had considerable property in the church, and his cousin could have none at all" (PP, 181). If Elizabeth marries him, Barry may help Collins, Charlotte's husband's, by granting him another library: his cousin cannot. Even in such idle musings about the future of one's friends, therefore, *evil* will intrude.

The most intelligent and trustworthy characters, from Barry to Elizabeth to the parsonage, at some point or another have their opinions, perceptions, even *emotions*, on what they would like to believe. We find, for instance, that Barry did not endeavor to separate Bingley and Jane solely because he had his friend's best interest at heart. Barry believes he has not been biased, and he proudly asserts in his letter to Elizabeth that he had observed Jane and concluded she was not

in love with Wingley: "that I was desirous of relieving her indifferent is certain--but I will venture to say that my investigations and decisions are not usually influenced by my hopes or fears" (FR, 182). In spite of Darcy's confidence in his own dispassionate conclusions, it will become clear that he "had formed [the] plan" of seeing his friend Wingley married to his sister: the narrator ironically suggests that "It is probable that [the plan] might add something to his lively concern for the welfare of his friend" (FR, 182).<sup>27</sup>

Even Mrs Gardiner, so often the voice of reason, at times "transcends" very conveniently. After meeting the charming Wickham, she

tried to remember something of [Darcy's] reputed disposition when quite a lad, which might agree with [Wickham's] accusations, and was confident at last that she recollected having heard Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy formerly spoken of as a very proud, ill-affected boy (FR, 183).

and yet we will later hear Darcy commended by Mrs Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley, for the sweetness of his temper as a boy. When Mr and Mrs Gardiner, arguably the most sensible characters in the book, suspect Darcy and Elizabeth are in love, it will become "a matter of anxiety to think well" of Darcy. At last, however, they "could not be untouched by

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<sup>27</sup>It seems important to point out that this ironic "excuse" on the part of the narrator comes after Darcy has changed, showing himself in the best possible light as polite host to Elizabeth and the Gardiners. Darcy is being regarded favorably at this point in the action. The fact that his plans have influenced his perceptions and beliefs is not presented as an aspersion on his character, but as further proof of a generalized condition of humanity.

his politeness". "There was now an interest in believing" the housekeeper's version of Harry: their conclusion "that the authority of a servant who had known him since he was four years old . . . was not to be easily rejected" could not be an impartial one (FF, 281)<sup>12</sup>

Such relativity, however, is gradually reinforced after both Elizabeth and Harry have been troubled by their intervention at Rosings. Initially, the narrative voice has fluctuated between irony and uneasy objectiveness, a partial tendency to ideological pronouncements that appears to be linked to Elizabeth's own dogmatic tendencies,<sup>13</sup> as we have seen, blinded by her attraction to Wickham, and too quick to apply moral precepts as though, under patriarchy, gender had no relevance in choosing a course of action. Elizabeth has been misjudging the people around her. She will have to learn,

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<sup>12</sup>Trying to arrive at a definitive, impartial conclusion about Harry's guilt on the basis of the text's admitted relativism has had some critical success. When Austenbach, for instance, concludes that "Harry's [childhood] is a sullied contamination," Austenbach emphasizes Mrs Reynolds' portrait of Harry as a sweet-tempered child (FF, 281-82) and Harry's own representation of himself as "suffered and overbearing," seeing "his name was outside my family circle" (FF, 282), and finds them irreconcilable (cf. "Annie and Albert on Patriarchy," in *English a Family of Nations*, p. 224). What Austenbach fails to take into consideration is the fact that Mrs Reynolds was part of the circle of intimates to whom Harry showed deference, and that she was undoubtedly also partly influenced by the fact that "he is a liberal sinner": as Mrs Gardiner hints, such a virtue has great weight in the feelings of a servant (FF, 282). In the end, re-appraisal of Harry, or of anyone else in the novel, is absolutely trustworthy.

<sup>13</sup>Radcliffe has given the name of "character novel" to this coloring of narrative pronouncements by the style of a character speaking in a passage (cf. ib., 184).

however, that her greatest rejection has been her marked condemnation of Eury.

### Two Characters: Laughing Eury and Jane Belmont

Elizabeth's personal development must be placed within this context of relativization of the main characters' aspirations to certitude and impartiality in the process of acquiring knowledge and applying moral principles. An outline of Elizabeth's general process should be helpful as introduction to an analysis of what we shall call her two major shortcomings. Her process can be seen to fall into four parts: in the first volume, Elizabeth makes a series of judgments; in the second, she realizes her mistakes and is therefore humbled at Rosings; in the third she is humbled again by Lydia's elopement; later, her strength carries her through Lady Catherine's attack, her behavior giving hope to Eury, which leads to a happy resolution. Superimposed on her learning process we find the evolution of her laughter: Her first stage is characterized by brilliant self-assurance. By the end of the first volume, and for part of the second one, it seems that she does not need as much to grow as to overcome the adversity of a very unideal situation. Her problem does not appear to be epistemological, but simply one of acquiring the proper moral attitude as she grapples with adversity. Then, at Rosings, Elizabeth will abruptly have to face her mistakes and to revise her approach to knowledge: this phase overcomes her shortcomings. Her trip back home will be

equivalent to her crossing a threshold later, her readiness to face will reassure her. By the end of the second volume, "everything wore a happier aspect" (22, 128). The prospect of a righteously true appears as a partial release from the limitations of her home and society. Her reunion with Darcy at Pemberley is interrupted by news of Lydia's elopement; her despairing of a renewed relationship with Darcy will not dampen her ability for spirited self-defense when facing Lady Catherine, and she is rewarded by love. In consequence, she not "only smiles": she laughs (26, 180).

When seen as an overlay on her learning process, the evolution of her laughter shows Elizabeth as discerning. As heroine, she has been crowned and invested in a narrative dignity that is based on her high intelligence and moral character and celebrated by the proximity between her consciousness and the narratorial report, but which is simultaneously undermined by Darcy's snub and her family's folly. Such humiliations act as foreshadowing for the episode when Elizabeth comes to realize how deeply she has been mistaken when she has let her attraction toward Wickham and her indignation toward Darcy make her narrow and dogmatic. While she laughed at Darcy's self-importance, she was impervious to his purposeful disdain and to the unrelenting of the Bingley sisters. At that point, it was Darcy who assumed the position of the "superior," who "was gloomily serious," who "stared majestically," who "cannot and do not wish to

rough. . . ." (PP, 112). However, as Elizabeth assumes the absolutist attitude of classily condemning Charlotte,arcy, even Bingley, thus refusing to admit the limitations of her own judgment, she becomes indignant and disappointed. Then, like the carnival king, she has her disguise and mask torn off. The shock she keeps on herself when her own reflections on Mary's letter make her realize her mistake becomes her undoing, "equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis" (PP, 117).

Although the first volume is so mistaken, as replete with the obsessions of Mrs Bennet, Collins, Sir William Lucas, as it comes, Elizabeth's situation seems to be characterized by increasing hardships. Because she has no fortune to inherit, she must be on her guard against falling in love with a very poor man, Wickham, apparently the victim of Darcy's cruelty (although she recognizes that, if she does fall in love, it would probably not "be wisdom to resist" (PP, 124)). Throughout most of the volume Elizabeth's festive spirit has been sustained even in humiliation by the confidence that everything will turn out as it should in the end. By the last chapter in the volume, however, "Even Elizabeth begins to fear" (PP, 124); by the first chapter of Volume II, "Hope was over, entirely over" (PP, 133), is the matter of Jane and Bingley at least. With Charlotte married to Collins, Jane unhappy, Wickham unattainable, it begins to seem to Elizabeth that there is little chance of happiness for women in this world.



As Jane tells her, Elizabeth is in danger of becoming embittered (FF, 180). Her ability to laugh seems momentarily in peril: for all her love of absurdities, "she had known Sir William's [and, I might add, those of all her neighbors] too long" (FF, 180).

Ironically, Elizabeth will regain her ability to laugh when she learns to recognize her own "follies and inconsequentialities," although the lesson is painful.<sup>40</sup> For a while, however, the only alternative to Elizabeth's dissatisfaction seems to be Jane's docility and resignation. We begin by agreeing with Elizabeth against Jane; we will later come to see the flaw in the former's attitude as well. (I might add that the contrast between Elizabeth and Jane helps to make us, as readers, more prone to fall into Elizabeth's errors. Because we have been seeing Elizabeth's judgment as superior, we tend to identify with her and her views. Therefore her increasing sadness sure does.)

If so earthly matter does Elizabeth seem as sure as she is of Lucy's guilt in having made Jane unhappy by separating her and Bingley and in having ruined Wickham's future. What, indeed, by Lucy's arrogant manner of proposing to her,

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<sup>40</sup>As Bakhtin says, "indignation, anger and dissatisfaction are always undivided: they exclude the one toward whom they are directed.... They create interpersonal anger. They divide, while laughter [that is, what Bakhtin calls "joyful, open, festive laughs," or "the laughing laugh," rather than the "closed, purely negative, satirical laugh"] only unites; it cannot divide. Laughter can be combined with profoundly serious emotionality (travesty, comic fear, and others)" ("From *Speech Made in 1929-31*," in *Speech Genres*, p. 194).

Elizabeth throws these accusations in his face, she talks in terms of absolute conviction, saying, "You dare not, you cannot deny . . .," and, "Can you deny that you have done it?" It is not the evidence she possesses<sup>2</sup> that provides the certainty, however; the source of her assurance seems to be the indignation she feels. Her anger increases when she notices "his rolls of affected irony" (PP, 181). When he suggests she is only resentful because of his lack of "policy," his sincerity and "abhorrence" of "disguise" in the manner of his proposal, her reply is categorical: it was not "the mode of your declaration," unquestionably as it was, that led her to reject him, but the fact that "I had not known you a week before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry" (PP, 182). (It is ironic that he is stung by the result of not being "gentleness" in the style of his proposal more than by her more serious accusation about his "selfish disregard for the feelings of others.")

As a result of this confrontation, both Barry and Elizabeth will change radically. Before this incident, Barry had admitted only to faults of "temper": "I have feelings enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth had suspected Barry's role in separating Jane and Bingley, but Colonel Fitzwilliam's relation of Barry's own wife (PP, 182) convinced her that Barry "was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause of all that Jane had suffered, and still continued to suffer" (PP, 182). For the story of Barry's mistreatment of Wickham, she has only the latter's word.

I dare not touch for.--It is I believe too little yielding--certainty too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the failings and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offences against myself." Before Elizabeth rejects him, Darcy's pride does not allow him to see that his "understanding" of his own worth relative to others' leads him to offend other people himself. This degree toward his fellow beings is related to his belief that he can know himself and others with such finality as his preceding statements show. Therefore he cannot understand, at the time, how damaging Elizabeth's replies, "you have shown your fault well.--I really cannot laugh at it" (PP, 88). Luckily for Darcy, however, Elizabeth's angry rejection will shake him later. Mr. Wickham's tale to be laughed at will in time instruct him in what, according to Austen, always tends: "the inadequacy of all worldly life-views to fit an authentic human being" (PPW, 141).

Elizabeth, for her part, will eventually discover that the disapproval she prided herself on was influenced by prejudice. Her vanity was wounded by Darcy's slight, and flattered by Wickham's attentions; therefore she has realized what was worst in accordance with these feelings--as Elizabeth herself will conclude, "that I have in love, I could not have been more completely blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly..." (PP, 184). Reason, undoubtedly, greatly helps Elizabeth to accept this humiliating but just discovery (her

own words). But what makes her take the first step in accepting Garry's version of his dealings with Wickham is the realization that what seemed objectively unmeasurable can be plausibly argued from a very different viewpoint:

. . . Garry had proved more strongly than the affair, which she had believed it impossible that any circumstance could so represent, as to render MY Garry's conduct in it less than infamous, was capable of a turn which must make his entirely blameless throughout the whole. (PP, 202)

Once she accepts that a different "turn" is the representation of events is possible, she can contrast the two contradictory accounts, Garry's and Wickham's, both seemingly coherent. It then becomes necessary to seek external evidence. In Wickham's aid, she can only invoke "the general approbation of the neighbourhood," mostly based on his graceful social manners. In support of Garry's version, however, she can bring confirmation in the form of what Colonel Fitzwilliam told her only the previous morning. Most importantly, Garry tells Elizabeth his own family secrets, his sister's decision to elope with Wickham (a decision she did not follow through). It is Garry's trusting her with such potentially humiliating information that clinches the matter for Elizabeth. Indeed, the very fact that he has written to her constitutes evidence that he has changed, that he is no longer inflexible, no longer disinclined of the opinions of others.<sup>42</sup> Convincedly,

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<sup>42</sup>Anna Eliza pointed out that Garry's refusal to clear himself publicly of Wickham's charges shows Garry's adherence to "the fundamental principle of philosophy, which is 'never to explain, never to explain.'" ("Jane Austen's *Pride*

his logical discourse, the force of his arguments and his moral tone, make his story more plausible. But what is most convincing is Garry's first gesture of recognition of his need of her favorable opinion, his first effort to assert himself to obtain it. Inflamed by Garry's insinuation, now to reject his own proud self-sufficiency, Elizabeth comes to conclude "she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (PP, 104).

This moment, then, represents Elizabeth's most important overcoming, the discerning and unseeing that will transform her ("Till this moment," she says, "I never knew myself"— PP, 104). In consequence of it, we may discern two parallel processes occurring internally in her. First, she will learn to be less authoritative, less autologic in her judgments. Accordingly, she will soon be reading and rereading Garry's letter, experiencing profoundly how her feelings are relative to the viewpoint she assumes:

She studied every sentence, and her feelings towards the writer were at times widely different: when she remembered the style of his address, she was still full of indignation; but when she considered how unjustly she had condemned and upbraided him, her anger was turned against herself; and his disappointed feelings became the object of compassion. (PP, 122)

Second, she will realize she is liable occasionally to the same feelings as "every body." For everyone's views tend to

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and prejudice in the eighteenth century mode," in *Pride and Prejudice*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 348.) That this critic does not remark is that, by the same principle, Garry's long letter expounding his notions shows a turn away from such a lofty sense of pride.

be influenced by his/her needs, wants, wishes; it is this very human limitation that makes people absurd and ludicrous, but it is also inseparable even for those who laugh.

Almost immediately after Elizabeth's crisis of self-recognition, we begin to see its consequences during one of the most carnivalesque chapters in the novel. Jane and Elizabeth, returning home, are joined by Kitty and Lydia "at the appointed inn where Mr Bennett's carriage was to meet them" (PP, 318). This meeting at the inn becomes a "hybridized" moment, an encounter that will mark Elizabeth's passage from a position where she tottered on the edge of becoming a "captive satirist," placing herself "above the object of her mockery," to an attitude more expressive of "the point of view of the whole world": she now laughs like "belong[s] to it" (PP, 318). Marking the occasion we are of feasting and overabundance, the younger sisters "triumphantly displayed" a table laden with cold meat and showed their older sisters their many purchases, including a very ugly hat. Lydia's grotesque but "triumphal banquet" is also the occasion for her "free and border speech." Indeed, we may apply to her chatter Bakhtin's description of "carnival speech": "the popular-festive right of laughter and obscenity, the right to be drunk, was extended to the table" (PP, 319). Thus, she talks freely about Wickham as "a certain person we all like" in personae of the author, and then laughs at Jane and Elizabeth for their "familiarity and discretion" when they used the author

away (77, 138). Lydia's chapter is sprinkled with references to the business of "getting a husband," a process she appears to consider similar to acquiring vittles, hats or any other commodity. She also narrates a recent prank when she and Mrs. Farster dress a servant as a lady for a dance at Colonel Forster's, an episode in which we find such carnivalesque elements as travesty (she is female), masquerade (the unknown gentleman's polite treatment of the disguised servant contrasted to the ladies' laughter), and free and frolicsome conduct (servant mingling with the guests) (77, 138, 139). This moment of folly, during which Lydia repeatedly says she could have died of laughter,<sup>25</sup> becomes the framework for Elizabeth's realization that she had once "harbored" views of Wickham's involvement with Mary King that were similar to what Lydia now expresses, though in much coarser fashion. The entire chapter underscores the great differences and yet the troubling similarities between Lydia and Elizabeth. Our protagonist must accept that she, like Lydia, like "every body," may be partial and blind in her opinions.

This feast at the Inn marks the beginning of Elizabeth's recovery of her laughter, while it celebrates the end of her excessive reliance on the truthworthiness of her own impressions, like a carnivalesque banquet in which "The end

<sup>25</sup> "Death from laughter is one of the forms of gay death," one of the typical images of carnival, according to Bakhtin (1984, 146).

must contain a new beginning, just as death leads to a new birth" (RHS, 285). At Stamford Parsonage, where she had been staying when Darcy proposed to her, and where she read and reread his letter, "the happy spirits which had seldom been depressed before, were now so much affected as to make it almost impossible for her to appear tolerably cheerful" (PP, 111). Once home, Elizabeth can once again confide in Jane, be comforted by her love and laugh good naturedly at her reaction to the story of Wickham's wrongdoing:

What a stroke was this for poor Jane! who would willingly have gone through the world without believing that so much wickedness existed in the whole race of mankind, as was here collected in one individual. (PP, 112-3)

Elizabeth can now try to "extract" a smile from Jane, pressing her in jest to "take your choice" of either Darcy or Wickham:

"There is but such a quantity of merit between them just enough to make one good sort of man; and of late it has been shifting about pretty much. For my part, I am inclined to believe it will be Darcy's, but you shall do as you please." (PP, 113)

It is now possible for Elizabeth to mock herself, saying Jane's mixture of "regret and compassion" saves her the need to feel either: "'If you lament over his much longer, my heart will be light as a feather.'" She can also admit that she has been vain in her dislike of Darcy, using it as a spur to her senses, "an opening for wit" (PP, 114). The phrase she uses to describe her own vanity, "'I meant to be uncommonly clever in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason,'" is significantly similar to the narrator's ironic description,



early in the second volume, at the moment of the Murtyes neighbors: "every body was pleased to think how much they had always disliked Mr Murry before they had known any thing [against him]" (FF, 134). Elizabeth now has a more complex, more dialogical image of herself, for she knows she is, for all her acuity, liable to make the same mistake in judgment as "every body." Paradoxically, just as she admits her blame of her wife, her festive humor is restored.<sup>42</sup>

In Volume II again, Elizabeth is traveling with the Gardiners, happy even in having "the attentive silence of regret at my sister's absence," for, she reflects, "a silence of which every part promises delight, can never be successful, and general disappointment is only worked off by the defeat of some little peculiar wish" (FF, 218).<sup>43</sup> Through a series of incidents, their pleasure trip takes them to Pemberley, Barry's home, and a great and ancient house. There, Elizabeth will encounter a new Barry, new both because

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<sup>42</sup>This passage is related to the process of later events, Elizabeth's "dialogic relationship to (her) own will," as she has deliberated inwardly about Barry's letter and her own reaction to it. Her engaging in active dialogue with herself has allowed the destruction of any remaining "narrow wholeness" of her self image she may have had (cf. Smith on the dialogic of malingering, in FF, p. 118.)

<sup>43</sup>This passage exhibits a marvelous irony, for it shows how human beings will seek certainty even from such an unlikely source as frustration. Elizabeth has just learned her own fallibility, but she would believe her human condition if she did not strive for some assurance of the happy completion of her plans in the future, interpreting reaction as an offering to the gods, insuring everything else will march smoothly.

he has changed and because her own transformation allows her to see his genuine qualities.

Although Elizabeth has been accusing Barry for his failure to enter into community with others almost from the moment she saw him, she has consistently closed herself to any possibility of communication with him even when he had tried to approach her. True, his manner was often condescending, but her prejudice blinded her even to his occasional flashes of humility.<sup>20</sup> But now it will become evident that both have benefitted from their painful combat, for they are both now more capable of entering into adaptive community, into "new, partly human relations."

In spite of the changes both Barry and Elizabeth have undergone, their mutual and then private, self-inflicted throes are not unfruitful. Convolutions unconvoluted are defined as "psychotic actions directed at something on a higher level, at the king" (RHW, 127); "the old world (the old authority and truth)" must die and give birth to the new (RHW, 127). In *Being and Prejudice*, it is the traditional concept of novelistic love and the ideology of women as passive

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<sup>20</sup>One evening at Northwold, for instance, Barry asks her whether she does not feel like "dancing a waltz"; Elizabeth at first remains silent, and, when pressed, tells him she supposes he wants to despise her bad taste if she answers affirmatively: "I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a waltz at all--and now despise me if you dare." Barry's reply, "Indeed I do not dare," convinces Elizabeth, but does not move her to see him more favorably, partly because Miss Wiggley's jealousy and rudeness towards Elizabeth create a further barrier between her and Barry (FF, 21-2).

subjects of male desire that must die. When at Featherley Percy and Elizabeth meet again, having chastised and thus uncovered each other, they appear ready to begin a serious courtship, with all the traditional elements. Percy courteously introduces his sister to Elizabeth; she is impressed by his kind treatment of her relatives. The Cardinals they are surrounded by the setting of his money and his power. And then Lydia enters.

That slipperish will disrupt the progress of what might have been a conventional courtship, leading to a marriage insured in the canon of paternalist decorum. Instead of being tried at Featherley and flatteringly wooed by a knight who will put his power at her feet, Elizabeth will leave Featherley in frightful anxiety after getting news of her sister's "elopement" not. It is this situation that will make Elizabeth aware of her feelings, as she, momentarily reexamining her own situation, "minded at the perverseness" of realizing she loves Percy when apparently the family disapproval will make that love no longer possible (FF, 278). For Percy's part, instead of showing off his emotional base and discovering as its traditions to his lady's relatives, he will leave to seek Wickham, a man he has reason to distrust, and to persuade him to marry Lydia--indeed to buy him for her. In order to marry Elizabeth, therefore, Percy will have to deal with a rebel and use his own money and power to "save" the reputation of her sister, a woman who has shown that her

second drive is stronger than her "virtue" (pp. 144). Elizabeth will thus have to lose his aunt's love with dignity.

Throughout this string of events, Elizabeth will recurrently appear tempted by romantic notions of an impossible love for Darcy. Similarly, the whole family undergoes a revelation of Lydia's fate and its fatal consequences. Then, Jane characteristically sacrifices herself for everyone, while Mrs Bennet talks of death and death, and stays secluded in her room as though she were an invalid, waiting for her uncle to be brought to her as a tray. As Mr Bennet remarks, this "parade" gives "elegance to misfortune"; therefore, he ironically promises to "sit in my library, in my night cap and powdering gown, and give as much trouble as I can--or, perhaps, I may defer it until Kitty runs away" (pp. 199-200). After Lydia comes back as Mrs Wickham, still wild and unrepentant, Elizabeth continues to exert herself as the heroine of a sentimental novel, insisting that Lydia's marriage must ruin her own chances of happiness, for "it was not to be supposed that Mr Darcy would connect himself with a family, where to every other objection would now be added, an alliance and relationship of the nearest kind with the man whom he so justly scorned" (pp. 111). Finally, when Darcy and Elizabeth at last appear, ready to carry the two ladies away, Elizabeth and Jane, to a life of love and plenty, instead of the tedious struggles of sentimental fiction Elizabeth

experiences, in addition to the natural response, some embarrassment over Mrs. Bennett's vulgarity, her refusal to marry, and her officious attentions to Darcy. The text nevertheless laughs at her "pained confusion," for which "years of happiness could not make Jane or herself amends":

Yet the misery for which years of happiness were to offer no compensation, received none afterwards: material relief, from observing how much the beauty of her sister re-kindled the admiration of her former lover. (PP, 177)

Darcy, on the other hand, is, as he will later admit, similarly overcome by emotion and embarrassment during this reunion (cf. PP, 184). After both Elizabeth and Jane become engaged to their respective lovers, Elizabeth must still suffer from her entire family's ill-breeding and even Sir William Lucas's venalistic obsessions. These criteria undercut Elizabeth's and Darcy's heroic stature while at the same time deflating her feelings, romantic love and making the traditional presentation of the heroine as virginal, frail, all-spirit and only trembling body, and of the hero as a rock of self-sufficient strength.

Lydia's conduct, while becoming the occasion for the protagonists' debating, will also lead indirectly to Elizabeth's gratitude for Darcy's role in securing her marriage: her thanking him will provide the occasion for Darcy's second proposal. This episode marks the beginning of the novel's happy ending, which confirms the full transformation of both Elizabeth and Darcy. Such a conclusion must be understood

within the framework of their future home, Featherley, where tendencies to chaotic spacing and fellowship will triumph, and festive, unofficial trysts will win away any narrow, dogmatic, or prejudiced views.

#### Featherley as Partial Utopia

Although critics disagree on the meaning of Featherley (as indeed they do about almost everything related to *Hyde and Elizabeth*) there seems to be a consensus among many that Carey's utopian home rises above any ordinary mode of existence.<sup>42</sup> Even so its elevation as paradise: thus, for Frank Bradbrook, Carey's home conforms a picturesque "background of reason, expediency, beauty and delight."<sup>43</sup> For Alister Buckworth, it represents tradition and the wisdom of ancestors.<sup>44</sup> As Tony Hunter puts it, "Featherley is an all but impossible dream of a space--both social and psycho-visual enough to permit a mixture of reflecting speech and personed

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<sup>42</sup>Among notable exceptions to this view we find Walter Scott's. This novelist, in an unsigned review of *Hyde* published in *Quarterly Review*, provides the following famous comment: "[Elizabeth] does not perceive that she has done a foolish thing [in refusing Carey's hand] until she accidentally visits a very handsome man and grounds belonging to her admirer." *Hyde and Elizabeth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 451. From this perspective Featherley appears as a symbol of social mobility and social advancement, and Elizabeth, more than grateful, seems necessary.

<sup>43</sup>Frank Bradbrook, *Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries*, p. 87.

<sup>44</sup>cf. Alister Buckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate*, p. 179.

empires."<sup>66</sup> Other critics, however, regard its uncanny qualities in a negative light. For Nina Baym, *Pemberley* seems to be the embodiment of "artificially institutionalized" male power.<sup>67</sup> Maria N. Burin agrees, but she regards Austen's attitudes toward this masculine bastion as ironic. While *Pemberley*, according to Burin, bombards Elizabeth "with a series of stunning images, all expansive, lofty, sprawling," these "pictures of perfection" are ridiculed by the author: "Trade and Property breathe at perfection."<sup>68</sup>

I believe we may make sense of *Pemberley* as a vivid "bigger than life," accounting for both its fantastical possibilities and the novelist's ironic bent, if we regard it as a triumph of festive, relativistic, popular laughter over negatively critical skepticism, as well as a victory of irony over romance, if we consider it as carnivalesque utopia. From the moment we first see *Pemberley* described, the narrator seems to be playing with the trope of an "alien, miraculous world" that, as Bakhtin's description, characterizes romance (cf. *PTC*, 84). Elizabeth comes to *Pemberley* full of fear of being treated as an interlayer, a stranger; even before any plans of visiting the ancient house were made, the notion of visiting Derbyshire makes Elizabeth feel like a thief: "But

<sup>66</sup>Ray Tetter, p. 128.

<sup>67</sup>Nina Baym, p. 173.

<sup>68</sup>Maria N. Burin, "'Pictures of Perfection' at *Pemberley*," in *JENN AUSTEN AND PEMBERLEY*, p. 129.

surely. . . . I may enter his country with impunity, and run in  
 of a few petrified spars without his perceiving me" (Pr, 218).  
 The scene is so afraid of encountering, if not the horrors of  
 a Gothic castle, at least the resentment of a stern  
 aristocrat. When Elizabeth and the Gardiners reach his home,  
 what they see is definitely picturesque, so that instead of  
 stepping into a Gothic residence, they seem to be about to enter  
 a sentimental idyll.

They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then  
 found themselves on the top of a considerable  
 eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was  
 instantly caught by Peverley House, situated on  
 the opposite side of a valley, into which a road  
 with some abruptness wound. It was a large,  
 handsome, stone building, standing well on rising  
 ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;--  
 and in front, a stream of some natural importance  
 was scudded into gravel, but without any artificial  
 appearance. The banks were neither formal, nor  
 falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had  
 never seen a place for which nature had done more,  
 or where natural beauty had been so little  
 counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of  
 them well in their admiration; and at that moment  
 she felt, that to be mistress of Peverley might be  
 something! (Pr, 245)

This place is unparalleled by any other, at least of those  
 Elizabeth has seen. It is reached "with some abruptness";  
 thus, therefore, seems about to be stopped by one of those  
 "rude" moments of romance "where the career, prospect and  
 proscribed course of events is interrupted" (Pr, 245).  
 When they reach the house itself they find themselves in an  
 outdoor setting on full of the refined mingling of "art and  
 nature" as the subtitle; as Brian Barlin remarks, as the  
 visitors move from window to window the scenery seems to be



selected, composing itself into "uniform after uniform,"<sup>17</sup> There is only one problem with this near-magic "picture of perfection": as the home of a man who spoke to Elizabeth of "the intimacy of your connections," Featherley could not have admitted people "in trade" such as the Gardiners in any other capacity than as passing, anonymous travelers. It is this vagueness that saves Elizabeth from "something like regret";<sup>18</sup> as mistress of all this romantic grandeur, "my uncle and aunt would have been lost to me. I should not have been allowed to invite them" (FF, 104). There are not just any uncle and aunt to Elizabeth: Mrs. Gardiner, especially, has occasionally played the role Elizabeth's mother was so unfit to perform. A place that cannot receive them cannot have any real value for her. Thus, the romantic image of the apolitical home the sentimental heroine requires when she marries loses almost all its charm.

The meaning of Featherley and of what it "might be" to be its mistress is about to undergo a significant transmutation, however. For Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper, more hostile

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<sup>17</sup>Kathie Surin, p. 184.

<sup>18</sup>"It is characteristic of this novel that the 'lovely recollection' does not act itself magically, as if a spell were broken. Rather, the phrase 'This was a lovely recollection--it saved her from something like regret' has a certain tragic flavor, as though the 'something' were not completely dispelled. This lovely word as a *pharmakon* hints, looking forward to Elizabeth's falling in love, and it also gives testimony of the handy power of romantic notions, never totally dissipated even when pretails reality asserts itself."

and police than Elizabeth would have fancied for the job at work a house, speaks of Garry in glowing terms. He is not just a liberal, kind master and landlord, "affable to the poor"; as a child, he was never cross, but rather "the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world" (FF, 148). This view may not be completely coherent with Garry's own self-appraisal, for he will later recognize his debt to Elizabeth for his transformation and confess, "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper." (FF, 148). But Mrs. Reynolds' praise is not aimed at providing the context, irreversibly this judgment on Garry. Rather, it fulfills two functions. First, it shows that Garry can establish relationships of esteem and affection with those under his power. Second, it turns this power upside down by showing Pemberley from the viewpoint of a servant, proving that Elizabeth's thought, in free indirect style, that servants' opinions (though presumably no more prone to be absolutely certain than anybody else's) can be both important and intelligent: "What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?" (FF, 154). Garry's power, then, is regarded from the vantage point of the common people, of those who will benefit or suffer from his doing "good or evil" (FF, 151), and she reserves the right to judge him for it, to "give

him a good name?— or a bad one if he earns it, it is implied (PP, 148)...

This perspective on Featherley is totally new in the novel. For we had seen Harop's home as the "stable place" covered by Miss Hingley, a source of unity for Harop as "the work of many generations" (PP, 38).<sup>15</sup> As such it will continue to be seen by Lady Catherine, who considers it as superior as children of high birth as to be "polluted" if Elizabeth marries Harop (cf. PP, 102). However, if Featherley's lineage is explicable, from the viewpoint of what sort of community, of relationships among people, Featherley has promoted, we cannot consider its past in a favorable light. There it was that little Harop was taught "to think meanly" of everyone outside his family circle, while hypocritical little William was the love of his father's master (a kind but unwise old man, it would seem) through fraudulent means (PP, 108). At Featherley Georgian, Harop's sister, seems to have been the victim of her family's conceptions of accomplished women, perhaps "the product of too much formal training on her selfish brother's part."<sup>16</sup> At least, she is awkwardly, painfully shy before strangers (PP, 142), and in view of her

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<sup>15</sup>Hingley, in his sister's horror, seems to degrade Featherley by suggesting he would buy it if Harop would sell it, when the syncretistic Miss Hingley suggests Hingley should use it as a model for his own home: "Such a sale is not a possibility," says she, implying that tradition and high birth cannot be bought--and, ironically, casting aspersions on herself, whose family was once in trade.

<sup>16</sup>Walter B. Martin, p. 104.

brother (PP, 288). Finally, at Pemberley even Darcy has felt Darcy to be a little too imposing, since he jokingly calls Darcy "an useful object . . . at his own house especially, and at a Sunday evening when he has nothing to do" (PP, 80-81).

Nevertheless, as Darcy changes, so does the meaning and significance of his home in the novel. This change, as we have seen, is evident to Elizabeth at Pemberley for the first time. And almost its first manifestation is her attitude to the Gardiners, whom he initially takes "for people of fashion." When he finds they are precisely those people whose relation to Elizabeth had once made his regret advising her he is surprised, but he is now capable of judging Mr Gardiner for "his intelligence, his taste. . . his good manners," rather than his blood line or his involvement in commerce (PP, 288). After Darcy and Elizabeth get married, the Gardiners continue to be their frequent visitors, and the home remains "on the most intimate terms: Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them. . ." (PP, 344). In showing love and "warmest gratitude" toward the Gardiners, in becoming their intimate friends, Darcy is adopting Elizabeth's standards and placing personal merit before social class. The old Pemberley, then, is not imposing its own traditional structure on the lives of the Darrys before accepting Elizabeth as its mistress. On the contrary, the "family human relations" typical of festive utopias win over rank and hierarchy as the

basis for interpersonal relationships, and a new Pemberley is born. The death and rebirth of Pemberley do not produce, it is true, a grotesque collective feast, but a sort of Pictorial aristocracy, a redefinition of superiority and elegance, no longer based on social class or origin, but on personal merit. And yet the greatest joy this world has to offer is precisely heightened fellowship among those capable of commending with others.

In accordance with the birth of a new order, Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley becomes associated in constant food (PP, 248), a triumphal banquet representing the victory of life over death (cf. EM, 212). Miss Austen has pointed out the profusion of food at Pemberley, and the fact that this abundance carries over to long-hour labor on, when Nelly and Darcy come to dinner (cf. PP, 242). Indeed, the supper denoted "1st course" of venison, "roasted to a turn," the soup, the partridges, everything Mrs Bennet carries on that occasion, appears much more luxurious, more detailed than any previous banquet or Northfield dinner. This change need not be due, as Austen holds, merely to the presence of the two visitors, signifying that "we can bring what seems a cornucopian abundance to the nearly desert dinner table."<sup>27</sup> Rather, the "beautiful pyramids of grapes, melons, and pichers" that make guests gather around the table at Pemberley, like the success of Mrs Bennet's dinner party, are

<sup>27</sup>Miss Austen, p. 271.

he sees within the context of the festive atmosphere of the last volume, which is fast turning into a carnivalesque banquet.

As we have seen, after Elizabeth returns from Pemberley she faces many discomforts and "mortifications"; many of these contribute to take "from the means of courtship much of its pleasure," but they add "to the hope of the future." And so, Elizabeth looks forward "with delight to the time when they" will finally remove "to all the comfort and ease of their family party at Pemberley" (PP, 184). This "family party" formed a metaphor for the resolution of relationships found in the final chapter, which paints a picture of utopian happiness. It is, however, a mode of happiness that contains no romanticization, no "alien signaceous world" capable of supplying what was missing in unworldly characters, nor even capable of hardening those too soft at heart. In spite of the hero's and the heroine's improvement, many deficiencies remain. Thus, for instance, in a direct address to the reader the narrator informs us that Mrs Bennett will continue to be as stupid and ridiculous as ever:

I wish I could say, for the sake of [Mrs Bennett's] family, that the accomplishment of her married desire in the establishment of an easy and happy life for her children, produced an happy effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have rejected domestic felicity in to conceal a fire, that she was still occasionally nervous and invariably silly. (PP, 185)

For still the Wickhams be refused; rather, they will continue to be dependent and selfish. Lydia's letter to Elizabeth on her marriage, purportedly aimed at wishing the latter joy, shows the former's attempts to seek in so her new relationship to Barry in order to obtain "a place at court" for Wickham. That Lydia fully realizes the shamelessness of such a request after Wickham's treatment of her is clear from her closing line, "however, do not speak to Mr Barry about it, if you had rather not" (EP, 184). Of course, Elizabeth "had much rather not," but no conscious or willfully whole new way to those dependant, improvident relatives. The Wickhams' real promise, so notoriously absent after their wrongdoings, will lie simply in their fault itself: their being unable to experience any real love ("His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; here looked a little longer" (EP, 187)). Nevertheless, Lydia does not fulfill those unrealistic expectations, for she does not become adulterous.

Other characters similarly retain their failings. If marriage does not reform the Wickhams in correct borders the Bingleys, who will be still too kind, too kindhearted, and therefore easy prey for the freefloating Wickhams. Miss Bingley will still be necessary and hypocritical, while the rift with supercilious Lady Catherine will be patched up, but only so that she may ascertain "that politeness which [Prestley's] whole had received from the presence of such a mistress" and from the Gardiners' frequent visits (EP, 188).

By contrast to the world of halcyon sexual conventions epitomized by the Miss Singleys and Lady Catherine of the world, however, at Pemberley a new community has arisen, a novel world of love and equality. This universe provides a good environment for women, for the kind beautiful Kitty Bennet, Georgiana Bennet becomes a new younger sister and profitting from Elizabeth's instruction, and Elizabeth freely laughing, while Darcy, who during courtship "had yet to learn to be laughed at" (PP, 271), can now become "the object of open jesting" without losing his dignity (PP, 282). At Pemberley, with the Bennets warmly loved and the Singleys and the Darceys intimate and close neighbors, all the worthy characters enjoy their ability to commune with each other. Even Mr. Bennett becomes a bit more amiable, since he "delighted in going to Pemberley, especially when he was least expected" (PP, 282). If happy endings are wish-fulfillment, then the vision of the author of *Pride and Prejudice* may have included a good, nurturing environment for women, greater equality between males and females, the power of material abundance, and the joys of fellowship and love among people who choose community over the divisions created by traditional hierarchies of rank and status.

#### Conclusion

There are two worlds depicted in the novel's resolution: the official one of conventions and hierarchies, where human



relationships are governed by a cross commensuration, and the unofficial one of "new and purely human relations," the joyful world of the new Festberg's carnivalesque utopia. The two are deeply opposed, and yet they are forced to coexist, even to mesh. In a sense, the generalized war with which the novel began has now sharpened as two well-defined camps have arisen. But the gay relativity that the whole process initiated by Elizabeth has so skillfully argued cannot be overruled. After all, Elizabeth has been the slave who had to be taught the same lessons her teaching meant for others. When she resumes her clothing, she remains a woman temperamentally suited for joyful self-assurance, but she is wiser now, and her wisdom has taken the form of a new readiness to renounce her self-shaped perception, her knowledge that appears objective is actually relative to personal circumstances.

Therefore, people in utopia must still not only be in conflict with the individual world outside, but also with themselves, and with each other. Paraphrasing Elizabeth's reflections about Percy's inevitable "triumph" had he known that she now loved him (PB, 114-5), we may say that while these characters are mortals, there must be war. Utopia, by definition a place which is not, seems to create a diademy, but the merry war of ludicrous pride and prejudice, and thus the festive, subversive laughter at the inevitable partial blindness of mortals, must go on.

Just as the novel never allows one to escape into some realm protected from conflict and war, the cynicism also may extend to its own dialogic tendency. For the heroine, Elizabeth, an intelligent and independent young woman who will not submit to men, in spite of her work of equalizing, self-deprecating clowning will tend to adopt the same vocabulary she debates in Jerry. The arrogance typical of some males in patriarchy may infect the women who refuse to lay down, the novel seems to say. Both men and women may at some point need to learn to laugh (Jerry) or to reinforce laughter (Elizabeth). But even when these processes have already occurred, *Gilda and Freydisa* does not allow its readers to rest assured in the security that they can be permanent. Rather, parallel to the utopian challenge that promises that everything will be righted in this fictional world, is the warning we find the early promise of imperfection and impermanence still intact. From the beginning Elizabeth was aware of how much "people themselves alter" (77, 43), and nothing in the resolution really undermines this early promise. By its very nature, utopia simply oversteps flaws and deficiencies without concealing the problematic nature of the novel's fictional reality. In the end, in spite of the whole joyous turn of the conclusion, the initial irony directed against those searching after universal truths are allowed to stand; but now one knows enough about the narrator's tendency

to generalized suspicion to wonder whether she may not also suspect herself of a mistake for each truth.

CHAPTER 3  
"EMMA": WRITER, READER AND CLASS INTERTEXT

In a way similar to *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, of the three novels the one begun when Austen was older,<sup>1</sup> and finished only two years before her death,<sup>2</sup> is replete with carnivalesque characters and with elements of carnivalesque staples. It is also a profoundly dialogic novel, and one whose dialogism is masterfully loaded up with Austen's peculiar form of laughter. For in *Emma* we find a kaleidoscopic array of voices: perhaps even more than in other Austen's novels, as the narrator's own speech mixes with Emma's and that of other characters, readers are asked to adopt an attitude of generalized levity: as we shall see,

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<sup>1</sup>According to Cassandra Austen, *Emma* was composed between January 1815 and March 1816, when Jane Austen was 39-40. G. D. Leslie's challenge to the revised chronology, and her argument that *Emma* includes material that had earlier gone into *Pride and Prejudice*, the unfinished novel Austen worked on from 1803-4, when she was 28-29 (cf. "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 30 (1975):) would not affect the view that *Emma* was begun later than either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Northanger Abbey*. *Pride and Prejudice* was never in its original form as *First Impressions* when the author was 21. *Northanger Abbey* (first called *Emma*, later *Catherine*) was first drafted when she was 21. For a recent account of the traditional chronology, see A. WATSON 1978, "A Chronology of Composition," *The Jane Austen Companion*, pp. 47-58.

<sup>2</sup>*Emma* was perhaps the most 'gradual performance' of all Jane Austen's novels" (Margaret Rickman, *Jane Austen: Feminine and Fiction*, p. 121.)

by showing limitations in both the heroine and the hero the novel directs irony by turns at every one.

If no persons are fully spared, dominant ideologies fare little better. For in *Long* the title character appears more personally reprehensible, and the shortcomings of the hero, Hightley, are more significant, for they show the projection, blindness and inflexibility that affect even the most benevolent of patriarchy. As we have seen, a masculine tendency in Elizabeth Bennet, whose personality has been shown in a much more favorable light than Darcy's, cannot by the same token be attributed to personal flaw, and therefore becomes a moral and ideological problem likewise. Hightley's failings cannot be dismissed as hypersensitivity in origin. The attraction in *Long*, moreover, is more complex than in any other of Austen's novels, for Long may be shown to act as the clown, the agent of carnivalesque disruption in her world, and yet she is more personally mistaken and more responsible for the problems she encounters than Elizabeth or Catherine. This complexity creates a many-layered irony that makes the novel more dialogical than its predecessors, more deeply engaged in an estate and socially sense-making examination of qualifications and counter-qualifications of ideological positions.

Part of this complexity is based on the contrast between the heroine's subordinate social position by reason of gender and her prominence as one of Hightley's highest-ranking

existence in terms of social class. Again, the other two novels present women in very different social situations: each novel may be seen as posing a different set of ideological questions, even suggesting different positions regarding a distinct group of women in Austen's society. While the personal characterization of the protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice* suggest that it was possible for a woman of the novelist's time to attain a small but real and intellectual education as such as men, and while the attitudes of the heroine in *Northanger Abbey* may convince a reader that even "ordinary" young women, nurtured into reading romances, could use the limited cultural resources at hand to become active, alert social agents, the situation and actions of the heroine of *Emma* can be seen as proof that in a society where women's rights are severely limited as women, not even those in a relatively powerful position, can count themselves as exception. While Elizabeth Bennet must hold her own against social forces at play in country villages, Emma is inclined to single young women in possession of very little fortune, and Catherine Morland must contend, in addition, with a generalized contempt directed against very young and inexperienced females. Emma seems blessed by holding a position of privilege at the center of her social world. And yet their destinies are not much different.

From the viewpoint of *Northanger Abbey* heroine, Emma's presiding at her house, Hartfield, is one of the conditions

ending is a world-upside-down, with strong satirical tendencies. It is inconceivable among the ending was the most stupor of all of Austen's novels, and in Emma and Pride the ending begins with Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley, in Emma the story begins with the protagonist's partial loss of the nearly-utopian situation she has enjoyed for years,<sup>3</sup> and ends, substantially, in what may be seen as either a further loss or a recovery of her former ideal situation. But there are aspects of Emma's initial and final situations that satiricist allegorists do not seem to fit. From the perspective of both class and gender, the social world in Emma exhibits a tendency to insert that which is recognized as part of social reality, but which he does not discuss in any detail.<sup>4</sup> In order to investigate Emma's conservative social and political role in managing Northfield, her clash with the police authorities themselves who labor "toward the acquisition of social and political status,"<sup>5</sup> and her interesting

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<sup>3</sup>Emma, let us remember, "seemed to enter some of the best elements of happiness; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (2, 10). Although Austen mentions "the evils of Emma's situation," these are the disadvantages of a highly privileged person: "the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself."

<sup>4</sup>cf. Bakhtin's discussion of "unscripted scenes" as language ("Discourse in the Novel," 31, 37); see also pp. 46-48 below.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Langland, "Nobody's Angel: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel" (unpublished manuscript). I believe Langland's analysis can be successfully applied to the discursive situation of women in Victorian works written some decades before the Victorian

with servants and the indigent, we will need to return to Foucaultian categories. Here we must explore a sense of her relative lack of the power invested in her, which she transmits and upholds even while resisting it, and which defines her as one who can possess power only as a domestic contact. In the end, Here will willingly enter into a cardinal relationship more equalitarian than most, but framed by a social context severely limiting her views.

The present study will investigate Here's reactions to her world from the double perspective of class and gender. Three areas appear to be of primary importance in considering public and private aspects of Here's life, and their interrelations: first, vernacularized categories that define the ways in which the narrating voice relates to the characters; second, some of the discourses that go to make up the ideological universe of *Highbury*; and third, the ways in which Here exercises power and the avenues of action that are open to her.

### Context

In the novel opens, Here Woodhouse, twenty years old, is undergoing a crisis typical of middle-age: she has been busy managing her household for years, but now her last dependant, Miss Taylor (actually her governess), is married and gone. Here is left with only the male head of the household for  


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 care.



company, but he "composed himself to sleep after dinner, and [Emma] had then only to sit and think of what she had lost" (II, 4). Our heroine suffers from what today's women's magazines call "empty-nest syndrome" before she even understands marriage.

This situation is only one of the many ways in which Emma's home, Hartfield, constitutes a "worldwide-drama" similar to that found in carnivalesque households. In Hartfield, Emma is responsible for the welfare of the household; she has been "mistress of the house and of you all" since she was twelve (II, 37). Her father, "a valitudinarian all his life" (II, 7), acts rather like the stereotype of a placid old woman. Instead of protesting his loss and his children, he constantly needs to be humored, handled, comforted. At Hartfield, then, male becomes female, a child rules over adults, the father obeys the daughter. Furthermore, Mr Woodhouse, rather than seek to "reestablish" his daughter, as other parents do, was sadly grieved when his eldest daughter, Isabella, married; even now, nine years later, he has not become reconciled to her marriage (II, 4). He takes marriage in general and becomes depressed "by the idea of his daughter's attachment to her husband" (II, 48). Emma, for her part, is the opposite of most young ladies in her determination of never marrying. Initially she is as certain

that marriage is not for her as her father could wish (pt. II, 84).<sup>6</sup>

But Emma is destined to find love and marry. The reader's attitude to Emma's marriage may be related to how one reacts to innocence, immaturity and laughter in this work. If we agree with Wayne C. Booth that the "brightness of [Emma's] marriage" represents "a conclusion to all the comic wrongness that had gone before,"<sup>7</sup> we may then conveniently overlook, as Booth does, Knightley's decision to elope has been, Daniel Abbey, in order to move into Hartfield after his marriage. The decision to leave the Abbey, the largest estate in the vicinity of Highbury, would not only appear unwise in the managerial eyes of William Tarnham, Knightley's steward, but also expose him to the scorn of the citizens of this world (pt. II, 189). If, considering marriage important for Emma and dealing on the affirmation of Mr Woodhouse's rights to be readily contained in the conclusion, we interpret the novel from a straightforward psychological perspective, we may have to agree with Bernard Paris that "the high spirits of the last several chapters are considerably dampened by the prospect of the newly-weds having to house Mr Woodhouse for

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<sup>6</sup>In spite of these unpropitious aspects of Emma's powerful situation, it must be recognized that this young woman, as we shall discuss later, immediately attempts to enjoy her privilege and influence for conservative ends from the viewpoint of social class.

<sup>7</sup>Wayne C. Booth, *The Novels of Jane Austen* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 183.

as long as he lives."<sup>2</sup> If, on the other hand, we consider Emma's marriage a self-imposed exile to England, "one of the sicknesses of Emma's wholeness," with William Halliday we may see Austen's "veiled desire to expose her readers" as a cover for the "secretly subversive, secretly democratic" intentions of the work.<sup>3</sup>

And yet a reading may be possible that will respond positively to the text's explicit claim and to its humor. It may be possible to consider the marriage, at least as answer to all of Emma's needs, at least personally solitary, and at the same time share the novel's simultaneous sympathy for Emma ("an excellent creature"--E, 34), Mr Knightley ("amiable," "cheerful"--E, 4, "always so kind. . . so truly considerate to every body,"--E, 380), and Mr Woodhouse ("anywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his reliable temper" --E, 7). To accept all this, we need to see the novel's broad of laughter not, as Smith holds, as a reaction to wrongness,<sup>4</sup> or, with Halliday, as a cover for serious

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<sup>2</sup>Edward J. Fuchs, *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1971), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>William G. Halliday, "Emma Woodhouse and a Violation of the Rights of Men," *Markhamia*, Circle 7 (Autumn 1974), pp. 125, 126, 127.

<sup>4</sup>Smith's assertion that the comic impact of the novel is based on "wrongness" than on resolved in the conclusion seems to be based on an optimism both regarding certainty of right and wrong and the perfectibility of human beings that seems hard to square with the complexity and skepticism of Austen's task.

latest. We need to find in the novel "the peculiar logic of the inside out is linguistic" that Bakhtin described as characteristic of carnival (1984, 11). We need to see the novel's inversions, the humiliations of the major characters, the generalized folly, as calling for our laughter, for an attitude of ambivalent, contestatory hilarity.

Carnival laughter, the great invlar, shows us the world "in its devil aspect, in its gay relativity" (1984, 11). And indeed, all of *Flaubert* is full of incongruity, of masks and faces and misadventures. In order to understand here we need to see her as the major character in an unwitting carnival pageantry, a comic procession in which the heteropeople unknowingly participate. As we shall see, in addition to the collective show of individual disharmony, the absurdity of individual characters becomes evident as the narrator's mimicry of characters' speech carnivalizes the apparent recreation of the narrative discourse. A further form of carnivalization occurs in the dialogic interaction of languages and voices of different characters.

The characters, however, take themselves quite seriously. With the possible exception of the novel's clown (Frank Churchill, aware of his roles and playing them with gusto, and Rose, weary of some of the roles others unconsciously play), each character thinks he/she is acting in the most serious manner possible, doing his/her best to uphold a stable official ideology. Whenever Mr. Elton is called to witness or

"good to the poor," when Mrs. Elton self-importantly presides at social functions (as Miss Bates would say, she is the queen, and "we all follow in her train"--E, 385), when she patronizes Jane Fairfax or pretends her devotion to her "poor cousin," whenever Elton reveals Mrs. Elton's pre-eminence as wife, when she is crowned by Frank at Box Hill as the real sovereign who "wherever she is, presides" (E, 140), when she is later surrounded by Mr. Knightley, when she patronizes and instructs Harriet, as Mr. Knightley lectures Elton, they could all be seen as engaged in a collective pageant in which participants are themselves in various clothes. As the narrator speaks we discover that actually everyone, public included, is, if not stark naked, unwittingly wearing today's dress.

#### Elton and Righburys: Old and Today's Clothes

Let us now investigate the ways in which the novel's characters can be seen as a comic entourage for Elton, defining and being defined by her. We must first observe that the Righbury parading in Elton is not the village striving to become a town; of the mundane concerns of its affairs we have only a single vivid portrait, as Elton looks out at "the busiest part of Righbury" from the door of Ford's while Harriet makes some purchases.<sup>11</sup> What the novel means poetically

<sup>11</sup>Elton sees an apothecary, a lawyer, a merchant's house, a butcher with his tray, a tidy old woman travelling homewards from shop with her full basket, two men quarrelling over a dirty lane, and a string of dawdling children round the baker's little box-van on the greenmarket, and was

concerned about is the sensitive handling of interactions and social relations among the village's leading citizens through such fictionalized tools as dinners and dances.

Highbury's foibles, independently of their sociologic significance, are highly enjoyable in themselves. They demand of the reader an ambivalent attitude, an attitude of "true open seriousness" that tends to liberate true intelligence and compassion, as did the popular laughter of Renaissance literature and culture (cf. 328, 330-31). The ludicrous contrasts they offer (mis)illusions are also highly meaningful for what they show about the network of relationships, customs and conceptions that make up social life, especially as these activities affect women. Emma's foibles often serve the added function of unwittingly pointing to the protagonist's mistakes.

The most famous of Emma's foibles, perhaps, is Miss Bates, whose waddling chatter has been shown to serve unexpected narrative functions. Thus, as Mary Lambillon suggests, one does well to read Miss Bates' speeches attentively to find out

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enough enough. . ." (L. 321). The concerns of these people, most of which concern take a social call on Emma, will not enter the novel directly; Emma dismisses the sisters of the "poor young lawyer" (L. 127) as "without exception the most vulgar class in Highbury" (L. 151); but when our heroine, having learned her lesson, finally looks forward to getting to know Mr Robert Martin, a peasant farmer (L. 479), we realize that Emma is partly about the size of the peasantry and tradesmen in a prominent place in Highbury. For an interesting though perhaps too traditional comparison between Austen and George Eliot on this point of including "ordinary life" below the middle class in fiction, see Frank W. Bradbrook, *18th Century Emma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1941), pp. 43-44.

man about highway.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Harriet Smith is not only a comic example of what dullness Mrs Goddard's school could produce, she also reveals important aspects of the nation her naive reactions to Anne's manipulations often unconsciously suggest the improbability of the match Anne proposes for her. Harriet lacks the discursive self-awareness of the educated bourgeoisie her modesty alone would make her ineligible to the role of wife of a man as vain as Mr Elton. Ironically, Anne, though in many ways Mr Elton's superior, is as sure of her own opinions as such a role could demand. As Harriet says to Anne, "How easily you talk! I don't hear you. You understand every thing. You and Mr Elton are one as clever as the other!" (II, 74).

Another of the novel's dulleys, Mr Woodhouse, is comic himself in his fears, which move him to seek neurotic refuge in inactivity and to refuse contacts with old friends. He needs so much time to adapt to the smallest change that he proposes, instead of Anne's attending the Coles' dinner party, their coming to Springfield "one afternoon next summer. . . to take their tea with us" (II, 208). He is also an exception to common stereotypes about typical male and female conduct. Like a delicate lady, he cannot bear to watch the rough play Mr Knightley takes part in with his brother's children (II, 81).

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<sup>15</sup> Laurence characterizes Miss Bates' speech as "limpid confusion" helping us to understand, in its meaning of "very low relief," "the finest intention of the plot" (Class Action and Sex Act, pp. 14-15).

he also share male rituals, joining the Indians instead of remaining with the gentlemen after dinner (pt. 2, 123). His failure as a traditional father and his transgression of gender roles would make him distinguishable from what Nabokov calls "the point of view of 'classical' aesthetics, the aesthetic of the ready-made and the completed" (190, 18), which demands a unitary response from readers, and also tends to uphold patriarchal ideals. But this novel asks us to laugh at him with Sanderson, as Mr Knightley and Jane do, reacting ambivalently to his fragile androgynous stance and to "his habits of gentle selflessness" (2, 2).

Mr Woodhouse also plays important semantic functions in the novel. One of his roles in the Highbury paperantry leads to the disclosure of the comic aspect of social intercourse. Flustered back to the nervous Eliza and other friends, he feels obliged, as usual, to make "the circle of his guests, ...paying his particular compliments to the ladies. -- " (2, 124). Once he has repeated his polite formulas ("Yes as as a great deal of humor to-day, I am sure. . ."), "the kind-hearted, polite old man might then sit down and feel he had done his duty, and send every fair lady welcome and away" (2, 125). He is motivated by his belief that "Young ladies are delicate plants"; his simplicity-mindedness blinds and thus unveils the silliness of such gallantry.

At times, however, Mr Woodhouse's indifference is capable of unwittingly producing what Nabokov would call



"prosaic 'arrangement' of the discourse of conventional  
patron" (28, 48), and of doing so at Emma's expense. Such is  
the case when Emma proposes to "do [Mr Elton] a service" and  
"look about for a wife for him." Her speech ironically shows  
conventional patron ("when he joined [the Westons'] house  
today, he looked as very much as if he would like to have the  
same kind office done for him") with some prosaic details  
about Mr Elton's "having fitted up his house as comfortably  
that it would be a shame to have him single any longer." Mr  
Woodhouse replies by equating the service of finding him a  
wife with that of feeding him once as a guest: ". . . if you  
want to show him any attention, my dear, ask him to come and  
dine with us some day. That will be a much better thing" (2,  
14).

In the preceding passage Emma's disavowal, her devastating  
marriage in her blindness to Harriet's reasons for marrying, is  
only half-hearted, since she will indeed go on to make an  
imaginary match for Mr Elton-- Emma is quite capable of  
mistaking the marital failure of the man she intends to see  
married to her friend Harriet Smith, laughing at his excessive  
gallantry (cf. 2, 49). In these, as in many instances, even  
while she sees her wit, her partial knowledge of the situation  
(her blindness to Mr Elton's intentions of marrying her,  
rather than Harriet) directs some of the irony against her.  
It seems to me the central point of the text is her laughter,  
and care, with her and at her, and ultimately (not least when,

as we shall see, irony is directed against the super-egotist Mr Knightley at ourselves. As E.J. Burrows has said, Emma's laughter could only be obscured "in the gloomy climate of such modern criticism." Burrows' savings of some valiant uses of Emma's wit can be read as a useful portrait of her characteristic laughing attitudes:

Even when she is laughing at others, one can make no worse objection than one would: "For shame, Emma! do not mind her. You divert me against my conscience!" (128) . . . And when she turns her wit against herself she is more irresistible than ever. Thus, when Mr Weston suddenly discovers "what Mrs Elton must be asked to begin she said," Emma knows "she was teared with fortitude" and wryly decides it is "almost enough to make her think of marrying" (128). To Mr Knightley's remark that, instead of smiling her, he will leave her to her own reflections, she replies, "Can you leave me with such reflections?" (128). And again, when Mr Knightley asks in mock indignation, "What do you deserve?", she replies, "'Oh' I always deserve the best treatment because I never get up with any other." (128)<sup>12</sup>

However, Emma's ability to laugh at herself as much as at others is not simply entertaining, as Burrows' commentary would seem to indicate, nor merely "gay, fanciful, recreational drollery deprived of philosophic content" (RWE, 12). In her case, the philosophic content is Emma's awareness of the contingency and seemingly irreconcilable heterogeneity of this world, and it is this that moves her to laughter and to tears. Witness Emma's reflections on the subject of Mr Knightley and Harriet Smith, to her "as union to distance every wonder of

<sup>12</sup>J. E. Burrows, *Jane Austen's "Emma"* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1944), pp. 55-128.

the kind. . . . could it be!--no, it was impossible; and yet it was far, very far, from impossible. . . . Was it now for any thing in this world to be ungrasp'd, instantaneous, inconspicuous--or for chance and circumstance (as second causes) to direct human fate?" (E, 414). Here there has been added by Harriet's hopes, in turn led by Mr Knightley's ill-judged, though well-intentioned attention to Harriet in behalf of Robert Martin.<sup>16</sup> The chain of mistakes on which her reflections are based confirms the justice of her conception of human fate. This conception stands in clear contrast to Knightley's idea of the orderliness of the universe, an idea he exhibits on many occasions, though never as strongly as when he surmises that Mrs Elton must treat Anne Fairfax, her superior both in "mind and manner," with deference: "no degree of vanity can prevent her acknowledging her own comparative littleness. . . ." (E, 187). In Mr Knightley's opinion, first, superior and inferior beings are readily classifiable, and second, inferiority will voluntarily yield to superiority.<sup>17</sup> With the first point there not only agrees the

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<sup>16</sup>Mr Knightley, it should be remembered, at Derswill talked to Harriet "in a very particular way indeed", by her own account (E, 414). He himself acknowledges having "taken some pains for [her] sake, and for Robert Martin's sake . . . to get acquainted with her" (E, 414). He couldn't have chosen a worse method to try his hand at matchmaking.

<sup>17</sup>Another important speech showing Mr Knightley's simplistic confidence that virtue will assert itself and inevitably triumph comes when he criticizes Frank Churchill for not daring to visit his stepmother, as he should: "she," says Mr Knightley "can always do . . . her duty. . . not by scheming and flinching, but by vigour and resolution" (E,

also holds a much more markedly hierarchical view of society, a view which the novel seems designed to undercut.<sup>16</sup> About the second point, the natural and inevitable triumph of Jane Fairfax's moral and intellectual superiority over Mrs. Elton, Mr. Knightley couldn't be more mistaken, for Mrs. Elton considers herself "Lady Pembroke." Nevertheless, Mr. Knightley could take his words of another famous knight, proclaiming that "the First Movers of the cause shall . . ." create order, by which "we will discern" that the "stable is not at the door."<sup>17</sup> These might agree regarding the

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[16]. It never dawns on Mr. Knightley that doing his duty is not a God-given possibility for every male. That a man can be as dependent and tied to others' wills and whims as a woman--from what we know of Mr. and Mrs. Churchill we may surmise they are as much likely to bow down before reason and nature than Mrs. Elton. (For an interpretation of this passage opposite to my own, see Kirstein Gusewirth, "Jane and the Dangers of Individualism," *The Improvement of the Estates*, p. 147.)

<sup>17</sup>For an interesting discussion, from a Spinozist-Aristotelian perspective, of the novel's concern with making "thorough (the author's) art the social gaps described" and with reconstituting "a sense of community," see Kirstein Gusewirth, "Jane and the Dangers of Individualism," *The Improvement of the Estates*, pp. 151-61.

<sup>18</sup>Gaiffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," *The Canterbury Tales*, eds. L. Ruth Hieatt and Constance Alcock (London: Norton Books, 1963), pp. 118-19. For a commentary on Chaucer's influence on another novel, *Paradise Lost*, see Francis Harris, "John Milton, the Side of Seth and Other Fables," in *John Milton: New Perspectives*, pp. 101-61.

attitudes of the "First Movers,"<sup>10</sup> but not that order is readily discernible in our early scene of "second names."

That the narrator agrees with Emma's view of human inequality and of the role of chance in human fate, is shown by the very contrasts found in the novel, between characters and their circumstances, among characters, in the contradictory qualities of individual characters. The festive treatment of such contrasts takes their quality as "carnevalesque misalliances," in this category of "The carnivalization of literature," according to Bakhtin, things which were in an official, hierarchical, bourgeois ordered, "half-repressed," and distant, are jostled and drawn into uneasy contact: "Carnival brings together, unifies, welds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, and the wise with the stupid" (198, 132-33).

A very partial list of carnivalesque misalliances in *Emma* might include the disparity between Mr Woodhouse's and Emma's abilities and their mismatch in conversation, "rational or playful" (2, 7), the contrast between Mr Woodhouse's

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<sup>10</sup>Although traditionally Thomas's First Mover speech has been interpreted as reflecting Chaucer's severely ordered cosmological view, recently many critics have argued for an ironic reading, a depiction of the universe as chaotic and Thomas's speech as either a ludicrous attempt to create the illusion of symmetry or a cynical endorsement of an ideology serving the interests of the aristocracy. For a discussion of the ambivalence and an interesting comparison, see David Fowler, *Chaucer on Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 23-25.

"apologies and civil hesitations" and Mr Knightley's plainness and straightforwardness (cf. II, 53-54), Mr Elton's saccharine charade and Mr Martin's assiduous, sensitive letter proposing to Harriet (cf. II, 140), the opposition of Mr John Knightley's early view of Christmas dinners and Mr Elton's delight in dining out (II, 112-3).

One of the most interesting inconsistencies in the novel is the almost brutal contrast between Mrs Elton's vulgarity and Jane Fairfax's patient "reserve" and elegance. This contrast, in turn, serves as foil to that between Emma herself and Mrs Elton: the former contrast is much more substantial than the latter. However, too, as has been often pointed out, there are more similarities between Emma and Mrs Elton (both snobbish and patronizing) than the protagonists herself would admit. Mrs Elton, furthermore, plays an important disruptive function by unsettling the social hierarchy Emma would like to believe inviolable. In this sense she is another curvy woman, less spectacularly seen perhaps than others created by Austen, but, as will be shown, necessary to the author's purpose.

Other notable inconsistencies are related to the incongruence of qualities joined in a single character, such as "the seeming inconsistency of gentle manners and a scornful heart" in Mr Elton (II, 134). The most evident example of such inconsistencies seems to be Emma's application of her superior intelligence to matchmaking, and her reiterated claims of her talent to find arguments to justify unjustifiable behavior

(cf. Mr Knightley's angry rebuke to her for "absconding the reason you have. . . . Better be without reason than supply it as you do" (11, 44). As for similarities between a character and her circumstances, none is more striking than that between Jane Fairfax's elegance and her miserable surroundings and between her superior abilities and the fate she narrowly escapes. The latter disparity, coupled with Miss Bates' chatter, serves them to make another contrast "between Mrs Churchill's importance in the world and Jane Fairfax's . . . and she saw every thing, the other nothing--and she sat musing on the difference of woman's destiny" (II, 384).

There is also "difference" in the fabric of *Highway's* social relations. Although the text seems to endorse Mr Knightley's tendency to stress the bonds of community against the class distinctions Jane likes to make, it also suggests that many of the social situations depicted are inherently unjust. The education many women receive, for example, is sadly inadequate: thus, Mrs Sedgwick's school, where Fanny first studied, is a place "where girls ought to be sent to be out of the way and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prejudiced" (II, 122). A good education, though rare, cannot save such women as Jane Fairfax from the "misery of victims" who must "sell their [talents]" in the "governess-trade" (II, 380-1).<sup>12</sup> Other negative

<sup>12</sup> Some critics seem to feel a need to apologize for Jane's "misrepresentation" as "a measure of the bitterness of her unfulfilled gratitude. Not an indication of unaccountability" (Barry Swenson

predicaments in *Highbury* include the poverty of Miss Bates and the scorn heaped on old maids (II, 18), or the situation of "Poor old John" Jolly, Miss Bates' father's clerk, now bed-ridden and destitute, and dependent on charity (II, 148). In spite of Mr. Brightley's or Anne's good intentions, in *Highbury* those made weak through the action of time or social rules are not well provided for.

Even among those who enjoy economic and/or social prominence, social relations are not always based on shared interests. One of the central conflicts in *Highbury*, as we shall see, is the struggle between the poetry, for which birth and tradition are basis, and new forces claiming status on the grounds of fortune and conspicuous consumption. This conflict is played out primarily in the war between Anne, representing the old order, and Mrs. Elton, representing the new. Anne's role as *Highbury*'s leading lady is acknowledged by Miss Bates, for instance; but younger citizens seem to be losing a sense of the social gulf between the old ones of the woodhouses and

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Sizing, "Review" for Gene Koppet's *The Religious Dimension of Jane Austen's Novels*, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 1 (July 1968), p. 181). And yet the attraction of a queenism was particularly dire. If we compare it to the economic and social privations of a male slave, we may see little difference. But then, a female's disability and dependence adds the ambiguous situation of a private prostitution, neither a member of the higher nor of the lower classes, desperately lonely and isolated in the case of a woman. Of course, governments were not founded, and though they might be founded on raped and then despised, most of their material conditions were superior to slaves'. But in the very material sense of a lack of communication with peers, being a government was indeed worse than being a slave.



the "new essay" of a Miss Martine. The Mrs Selous and Mrs Parry of the town no longer find it impossible that Mr Elton should be Emma's consort, and even Miss Bates concedes, in her typical fragmentary style, that "nobody could wonder if Mr Elton should have secured—" (E, 134). Emma's snobbish claim to the right to provide is increasingly being undermined by two factors: from the viewpoint of personal merit, Jane Fairfax seems superior, and from a social standpoint, the grounds on which the Woodhouses base their primacy are being superseded by new social realities.

Even the friendliest forms of social interactions, furthermore, tacitly evince the order of right reason. Thus, few neighbors are aware of the great distance between Emma, who nervily practices her music, and Jane Fairfax, a talented musician (Ch. E, 112). Neighboring neighbors, furthermore, are so little discriminating that they take it for granted that Mrs Elton "must be as clever and as agreeable as she professed herself." Her husband may be excused for thinking he had "brought such a woman to Highbury as not even Miss Woodhouse could equal,"<sup>22</sup> but Mrs Elton's "little judgment" and

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<sup>22</sup>The difference between Mrs Elton and Emma is shown by such details as the latter's "good guess" in refusing to counter the former's popularity with any indication of her real indignation of Mr Elton's new bride. This attitude stands in contrast to Mrs Elton's "ill-will" towards Emma and her "stealthy and ungenerous" manners towards Fanny (Ch. E, 181). And yet Mrs Elton does some good when Emma is negligent, too, in spite of the evils of Mrs Elton's patronizing Jane Fairfax. The latter finds some relief from the narrowness of her home and surroundings in accepting Mrs Elton's attentions. Emma, unable or unwilling to decipher Jane's needs, is astonished

condescendence towards her new "country neighborhood" tells her popularity more than the patronises are more proof of the invariable folly of humankind (cf. I, 281). Many of the Highbury neighbours, furthermore, are invariably middlemen, much given to gossip and to "toss[ing] themselves upstair" (I, 282-3). In sum, the movements of Jane's "set" of friends and acquaintances can be seen as the active display of carnivalistic contrasts under an appearance of tranquil homogeneity and *decorum*,<sup>17</sup> a collective exhibition orchestrated around the protagonist by people indispensable to her, even loved by her, but ludicrous and aimed at some herself will prove to be.

#### Carnivalistic Decorum: The Harroter as Clown

In spite of her many mistakes, Jane, unlike Mr Knightley,<sup>18</sup> will not refuse to dwell on all the "differences"

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that the latter should "blame the mortification of Mrs Elton's manner," but both Mrs Weston and Mr Knightley remind her that Jane must harbor a "very natural wish of a little change" (II, 289-90).

<sup>17</sup>For a view of Highbury, ideally applicable to Jane, as "the world of the pastoral idyll," see Lionel Trilling, "Jane and the Legend of *Jane Austen*," *Second Soliman* (New York: Viking Press, 1949), especially pp. 6-10.

<sup>18</sup>One of the reasons why Mr Knightley is able to preserve his view of the world as well-ordered is the sight of so much evidence to the contrary in his determination. His misanthropism, on his own purposes, his sturdy (and very attractive) imperviousness to "little things." The two characters are very different than he and Miss Bates, but she does not irritate him. As Mrs Weston very aptly says, "The next talk on<sup>19</sup> and if he wanted to say any thing himself, he would only talk louder, and draw her voice. . . ." (II, 289). Such single-mindedness, however, will need some correction, and his views some expansion, as we shall see.

she was around her. The narrating voice, in ways of depicting the characters' incongruities through their speech, is closer to Emma's voice than to any other character's. For Emma is the only character capable of duplicating Miss Bates' style, or of mimicking Mr Elton's characteristic phrases.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the character most often mimicked by the narrator is Emma herself, although the lens through which we see most of the action is Emma's consciousness. As we see her mistakes we come to realize that she is, as David Lodge puts it, "an unreliable focalizing character. The effect is not only a wonderful multiplication of ironies and reversals but also an intensification of what Henry James called the sense of fate."<sup>22</sup> Through this means the narrator's laughter requires the tasks of self-mockery; inasmuch as we identify with the protagonist, our laughter at Emma's blunders self-mocking as well.

What we observe in this narratorial "clevering" report is the narrator's irony mingling with the character's own self-

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<sup>21</sup> Graham Smith asserts that Mr Knightley establishes "the stylistic pattern of the novel": his speech "is identical to the objective narration with which the novel begins." Although Mr Smith acknowledges that all "characters we are to approve assimilate their speech to the objective narrative," he considers the "language of generalization" and frequently uses CC constructions of all the central characters and the narrator as somehow "mis-directed." Although he does not explain why generalizations are misaimed ("Narrative and Dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice*," *Scrivener Quarterly*, 32 (1974), pp. 104-26).

<sup>22</sup>David Lodge, "Jane Austen's Novels: Form and Structure," *The Jane Austen Companion*, ed. J. David Gray (New York: Barnesand, 1984), p. 177.

consciousness, so that we find the "simultaneous participation of two speech acts" in the narrative utterances, each not "differently oriented in its expressibility." This phenomenon is called "speech interference" in Volosinov's discussion of "quasi-direct discourse" (the latter here corresponding to "free indirect speech" and "free indirect style" in other authors) and of other forms of reported speech.<sup>15</sup> To illustrate how such "speech interference" may be read as a form of history, I will briefly examine a few passages where the characters' speech is reported. The disparity between the narrator and the character's positions becomes apparent when slight explicit criticism of the character's attitudes is coupled with an ironic imitation of his/her style. Such is the case when Anna takes up her excuses to avoid visiting her and Miss Bates, in spite of hints from Mr. Knightley and her own conscience, as hints could "counteract the persuasion of its being very disagreeable,-- we words of time-worned women--and all the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second rate and third rate of Highbury" (II, 184).<sup>16</sup> The sentence fragments indicate

<sup>15</sup>See V. M. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, tr. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 189-190, especially pp. 179-7.

<sup>16</sup>This passage is a good example of what Volosinov calls the "imperfective modification" of indirect discourse, in which thought or speech are reported very freely, abbreviated, "often only highlighting its themes and comments. . . . What comes through is the father's irony, his amusement, his hand in ordering and abbreviating the material" (p. 184).

Kate's own lack of conviction that incoherence dissolves into fluidity when Kate suppresses her sense of social superiority.

The narrator repeatedly uses the same technique, the fragmented presentation of characters' utterances, producing an ironic effect that can best be likened to the vocal modulation with which we mimic someone else's speech. Sometimes the mimicry is aimed at the collectivity, as happens when all of Highbury corroborates Marian's hopeless regard for Mr. Elton by recurrently singling the phrase of "Miss Eustace's happiness," and by "constant repetition of how much [Mr. Elton] seemed attached"--his air as he walked by the house--"the very setting of his hat, being all in proof of how much he was in love" (II, 184). Sometimes a report seems filtered through a double layer of ironies. When Kate overhears Mrs. Elton pressing Jane to accept a "situation" as governess, we sense not only the narrator's irony aimed at Mrs. Elton's snobbish criteria but also at Kate's ignorant dislike of the speaker: the job "was not with Mrs. Marching, was not with Mrs. Snuggs, but in factibly and spindever fell short only of these it was with a cousin of Mrs. Snuggs, an acquaintance of Mrs. Marching . . . Delightful, charming, first-class, spheres, lines, backs, every thing--and Mrs. Elton was said to have the offer closed with immediate effect" (II, 185). Kate appears to be serially misapprehending Mrs. Elton's seductive effusions.

The list of other cases of narratorial mimicry of fragmented speech would be long. In addition to Miss Bates'

characteristic use of fragments I will merely mention Frank's ill-concealed sufferings after his quarrel with Jane when she leaves Howell Abbey as he arrives (E, 343-4), Emma's astonished self-reproach after her fall ("What sinners should never again--no, never!"--E, 373), Mr. Knightley's uncharacteristic incoherence, stemming from heartfelt compassion for Emma and indignation towards Frank when he thinks she has been jilted by Frank: nevertheless, the effect is comic, for Emma does not love Frank (E, 418). In all these examples, fragmentation works to produce, even in silent reading, a strong acoustic image that increases the impression of narrative verbal mimicry.<sup>17</sup>

#### General Narrative Mimicry

In addition to fragmentation, Austen often uses other devices to create the impression of narrative mimicry. As she "represents the image of a language" in *Pride and Prejudice* through "dialogued interrelation of languages" (DB, 154), her narrator's voice seems bent on describing the behavior and language of such as of working lesser characters. One device by which she achieves this is hybridization; others include the juxtaposition of dialogic techniques in contrast to each other.

<sup>17</sup>I believe no other novel by Austen contains as many passages of fragmented speech. In addition to the examples already mentioned, Emma's speech is often mimicked by means of this device (cf., for instance, her discussing Mr. Knightley's praise of Mr. and Miss Martin's kindness, E, 174). Harriet herself speaks in fragments when equipted: Mrs. Smith's self-important chatter is often rendered by means of this device--

The first of these two devices achieves its effects through "double-accepted, double-styled hybrid constructions" nearly identical to those Nabokov describes in *Invitation* (18, 184-85). In these cases, the combination of "two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages'" seems to operate more through ideological difference than in the case of fragmentation. And yet the analogy to mimicry still seems valid. I have underlined the phrases quoted below (taken from a historical report of collective reactions to the prospective visit of Mrs Eiben's brother and sister, the Shakhovs) to represent the stress they seem to invite on oral reading: "After being fed with hopes of a special visit from Mr and Mrs Shakhov, the Nizhny world were glad to under the confirmation of hearing that they could not possibly come till the autumn. No such possibilities of revision could touch their intellectual status at present" (8, 182--emphasis added). Without even mentioning Mrs Eiben until the following paragraph, the narrator seems to be simultaneously laughing at her patronizing and at Nizhny gullibility, by extending the language of Mrs Eiben's self-importance as a framework of serious reporting. In the passages underlined, the nobility and the army seem to have merged into each word.

One of the mechanisms by which the text prepares readers to be aware of Mrs Eiben's self-aggrandizing is conveyed to us in the previous description of Mrs Eiben's underclassman Leonida Nizhny (cf. 8, 181). This description postulates

the reader to a certain interpretation. A similar device, by which a text attests a denoting, denouncing history is what Volosinov calls "present direct discourse," in which the juxtaposition of different types of discourse, their flowing out of and into each other, produce "a sort of reciprocal indetermination between the reporting context and the reported speech. . . ."<sup>28</sup> Thus, for instance, in the novel's first chapter the narrator comments that Mr Woodhouse has "manners of gentle selfishness," inspiring in him the idea that Miss Taylor, in marrying, "had done us bad a thing for herself as for them." When, a moment later, the old man's exclaims, "Poor Miss Taylor! . . . what a pity it is that we wonder ever thought of her!", the reader knows not to give credit to his appraisal of the situation. In fact, the reader's perceptions of all of Mr Woodhouse's speeches in that first chapter are colored by the previous descriptions of his habits, fears, wishes and limitations.

In a similar way, the preceding narrative "presents the apprehension" of the first conversation between Mr Knightley and Emma. When Mr Knightley challenges Emma, claiming the "merit" she is so proud of, having predicted that Mr Weston would marry Miss Taylor, was only "a lucky guess" (I, 12), one has a strong inclination to believe him, since the narrator has warned us about Emma's "disposition to think a

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<sup>28</sup>Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 131.



little too well of herself" (E, 5). At the same time, a large portion of the chapter has described Emma's meditation on the loss of Miss Taylor's company, and yet her qualified conviction to value her father's opinion, as the reader tends to sympathize with her. And then she counters Mr Knightley's challenge, "And have you never known the pleasure and triumph of a lucky guess? I pity you—I thought you did—our depend upon it, a lucky guess is never merely luck. There is always some talent in it."<sup>26</sup> This retort indeed seems cleverer than Mr Knightley's estimate of ordinary common sense. How we react to her impudence before an older man must depend on how we feel about women's independence, but her wit is clearly closer to the narrator's, who from the first page has regaled us with such fine ironies as the statement that "The danger [of Emma's "having rather too much her own way" and of her vanity], however, was . . . so unperceived, that they did not by any means such an misfortune with her" (E, 5-6). Thus the secretive preceding her conversation with Knightley subtly directs our sympathies toward (and the characters' direct discourse, although in this conversation they take opposite sides. In Valentinov's terms, "the basic themes of the impending direct discourse are anticipated by the context and are colored by the author's intentions."<sup>27</sup> The author, it would seem, is both laughing at Emma for her ability to

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<sup>26</sup>Valentinov, p. 134.

deceive herself, and fondly adorning her wit and the strength of her spirit.

Ezra's self-deception is never more evident than when she is making a conscious effort to avoid falling into previous mistakes, thinking herself cured of her tendencies to manipulate Harriet Smith's affections. The passage about to be analyzed is important not only for what it shows about Ezra, but also because it was used to "provoke the reader's apperceptions" of a passage in the next chapter, where Mr Knightley's mental processes show some similarities to Ezra's. In the first of these two passages, both in the form of free indirect report (or "quasi-direct speech"), Ezra considers whether to react to Harriet's remarks under her breath about someone she secretly admires, someone "as superior to Mr Elton!" Ezra sits in doubt: "Should . . . she let it pass?" Possible replies occur to her: for one thing, Ezra fears telling Jane "frequent discussion of hopes and chances" of Harriet's love such as they had in the past about Mr Elton, for this has caused Harriet much suffering. On the other hand, Harriet "might think her cold or angry" if she remains silent. Ezra decides "it would be wiser for her to say and know at once, all that she meant to say and know. Plain dealing was always best" (4, 341). Ezra's applying "the judicious law of her own mind" about how much to say makes them speak at cross-purposes, Harriet thinking of Mr Knightley while Ezra believes she is referring to Frank Churchill. Words like "wiser,"

"understanding," and "judicious" sound ironic in the reader's ear.

Ezra's interference and her mistaking Harriet's meaning in Vol. III, Ch. 27 will cause the two women much pain later on similarly, Mr Knightley's interference and his mistaking Emma's meaning in Chapter 7, will cause him needless pain. Mr Knightley, wishing to give Emma a hint of the intimacy he has shared between Frank and Jane, convinces himself he must break his own rule of non-interference. Much as Emma thought she was only moved by a desire to protect Harriet, denying the persistence of her urge to manipulate Harriet's life, Mr Knightley will not admit to himself that his own love of Emma partly motivates him. As we witness Mr Knightley's inner deliberations reported in free indirect speech, the narrating voice seems to subtly mislead his mental process. Unable to accept the burning ardors of his jealousy of Frank Churchill, Mr Knightley will rationalize his own needs to observe her reaction to his suspicions:

He set a little while in doubt. A variety of evils crossed his mind. Interference--fruitless labour--failure, Emma's confusion, and the acknowledged intimacy [with Frank], seemed to obscure her affection's sagacity. Yet he could speak. He used it as he saw to risk anything rather than her welfare. (8, 158)

He only hurks himself further by speaking, for he interprets her laughing manner as that Frank cannot be so close with Jane as evidence that there may be an understanding between Emma and Frank. Amazingly, Emma, though convinced Frank loves her,

Does not want this love; rather, she already wishes married and Frank's eventual marriage.

Thus, while most of the novel's narration moves from an reporting her thoughts, when the focus shifts to other characters' perspectives, those characters are mislaid (and deceived) as well. Her/their thoughts become expressions, not of an author's "subjective word," but of the character's "adventitious, subjective state."<sup>26</sup> Therefore no character escapes the narrator's irony, not even Mr. Knightley, considered by some critics the author's surrogate.<sup>27</sup> As one critic points out, "Knightley represents an integrity of personality and honesty of action that are exemplary in the novel. But even these virtues are incomplete in a world in which complete truth is 'very seldom' found in human discourse. . . ."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the irony directed at Mr. Knightley is all the more significant because he is an excellent, mostly right-thinking person--to laugh at mediocre characters is not as fully carnivalesque as to laugh at "the best of us," as the hero is usually called in sentimental fiction. Laughter at Knightley contrasts with that care of perfection created in

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<sup>26</sup>Woolfstone, pp. 128-9.

<sup>27</sup>Of, for instance, Mark Schorer, "The Exemplification of Jane Woodhouse," in Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Len Gougeon.

<sup>28</sup>Charles A. Knight, "Irony and Mr. Knightley," Studies in the Novel 2 (Spring 1970), no. 1, pp. 249-51. For further discussion of some "irrational" comments by Mr. Knightley see Jesse E. Spunt, "Feeling on Sea, Family and All": Mr. George Knightley," Studies in the Novel 5 (1973).

very sentimental novels by the narrator's repetition of their superlative commendation and by the heroine's feigned devotion to the hero.

In conclusion, both through the handling of discourse and the depiction of characters and their social milieu, *Emma* invites the reader to see this world and its inhabitants as comically failed, and yet to "despise" no one of them. "Foolish and ill," as Mr Knightley would say (MF, I, 411), both Emma and Mr Knightley are set up as admirable, and then mocked: Gail "dreaming and dreaming," as Emma would call it, about the "joyful relativity of all situations and order, of all authority and all ideological positions" (PDP, 118). Of course, we do not laugh as often at Knightley as we do at Mrs Elton, and in the same way, the narrator shows a marked fondness for the former and a distaste for the latter. Both, however, are indispensable to her purposes. Mrs Elton, self-important, vulgar, condescending, disrupts the quiet, romantic world of Knightley and reveals for us the blind and blind misdeeds of its inhabitants. Even those who, like Knightley, are not taken in by her, particularly those in the villagers' hypocrisy. Thus, if Mrs Elton's "idea of the single and the salver!" ("a table spread in the shade") is the result of romantic fashion, his ("the table spread in the dining-room . . . gaiters and ladies, with their servants and furniture"=11, 117) speaks of still, unimaginative, uninteresting habit. Only Emma is original, exceptional and

shaved, and yet she also is blinded, not by naive faith, but by her own vanity. As I read it, *Emma* asks us to laugh by turns at everyone, opposing an all-encompassing laughter to the exclusion by reason of class *Emma* would constantly put into effect, and even, as we shall see, to the exclusion of *Emma* herself, by reason of gender, from realms of action that would place any real demand on her intelligence.

### Literary and Conventional Discourses

Closely allied to this question of the stance of "gay relativity" *Emma* invites readers to take in the issue of the work's dialogic haunting of personal and collective voices in order to create its peculiar language. One dialogic perspective will lead us to examine the novel's paradoxical relation to a French fictional work (Eug. de Goossin's *Adeline and Theodore*). Additionally, the characters' stereotypical ways of grouping reading may be attributed both to their "fictionalizations" and to their using, in order to interpret their experiences, conventional constructs cognitive psychology has defined as "schemas" and "frames." Through these avenues we will examine the cultural voices by which characters understand reality and compose their languages, resorting to a common stock of concepts and narratives, simultaneously public and private, originating in books and in everyday life.

### Literary Values, Parody

In Emma parody of sentimental fiction seems evident in Emma's romantic notions of Harriet Smith's unknown origin and Jane Fairfax's supposed elaborate interest in Mr. Elton. Although one critic, Mary Lonsdale, stressed that in providing Emma with bookish notions, "Jane Austen had no particular novel . . . in mind."<sup>48</sup> Others have compared this novel to earlier ones. Kenneth Holzer, for instance, has pointed out the similarities and differences between *Emma* and two contemporary parodies, Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) and Helen Steward Barrett's *The Heroine* (1812).<sup>49</sup> Margaret Kirkham has also shown several points of comparison between *Emma* and Catherine's *The Birthday* (translated by Thomas Storer in 1789), most notably in the two heroines' belief "that they cannot marry because of their duty to their invalid fathers."<sup>50</sup> The contrast between the two works allows Kirkham to conclude that Emma, in her "role of devoted daughter, comes quite close to a sentimental stereotype." Austen's objective, concludes Kirkham, is "to criticize the romanticization of devoted daughters."<sup>51</sup>

None of these critical works, however, do more than mention Emma's allusion to *Don Quixote's* *Adelaida* and

<sup>48</sup>Lonsdale, pp. 48-9.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. Jane Austen's *Life of Miss Austen*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>50</sup>Kirkham, p. 188.

<sup>51</sup>Kirkham, p. 188.

Theodore (2, 141).<sup>17</sup> I have been unable to find in the critical literature any explication of the influence or refractions the French novel may have had on Austen's.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Austen's work seems to enter into dialogue with *Mme. de Genlis'* novel in many ways. For one thing, *Emma* and *Adelaida* are strikingly similar. They are both beautiful

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<sup>17</sup>In addition to the allusion to *Adelaida* and *Theodore* in *Emma*, Austen mentioned *Mme. de Genlis'* *Les Faillies de Charles* in a letter to her sister, Cassandra Austen, in 1809, briefly referring to "ideas worth transmitting." In another letter to Cassandra in 1807 she mentions *Mme. de Genlis'* *Alphonsine* for its "sensibilities which disprove a pen father's no pen."<sup>18</sup> Finally, in 1818, in a letter to her niece, Caroline Austen, from Austen agrees that the way in which *Mme. de Genlis* concludes *Clipsa at Theophrastus*, one of the tales in *Les Faillies de Charles* is excellent: "It really is too bad!--but allowing them to be happy together when they are married." She continues to talk of the rest of the work freely enough to lend "your Aunt Frank the 1st vol. of *Les Faillies de Charles* for Mary Jane to read. It will be some time before she comes to the horror of *Clipsa*." (See Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 12, 174 and 486.) There seem to be no allusions to *Adelaida* and *Theodore* in the letters.

<sup>18</sup>Other critics who investigate Austen's sources also tend to either ignore *Mme. de Genlis'* work or to barely mention Austen's allusions to it in her letters and in *Emma*. For example, R. W. Chapman notes references to *Alphonsine* and *Les Faillies de Charles* as allusions to *Adelaida* and *Theodore* (Jane Austen: Facts and Problems (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 41.) Freda Bronckow's *Jane Austen and Her Readings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), barely mentions Chapman's mention, although he suggests, "The influence of French literature is difficult to estimate, but it is probably greater than has usually been assumed" (p. 120-1). Bronckow also includes, in Appendix I, "Notes for Henry Austen" (pp. 141-1), a list of twenty-two recommended readings taken from Oliver Macvey's *The Progress of Language* (1789) which includes two works by *Mme. de Genlis*, followed by "Richardson's Works," and *Clarissa's* *Letters to Miss Anne*. Neither Philip Butler's *Jane Austen and the Art of Living* nor Cecelia Jackson's *Jane Austen: Women, Fiction and the Novel* mention any of *Mme. de Genlis'* works.



young women who were unaware of their beauty. Thus, Emma, though "very handsome. . . appears to be little occupied with it" (II, 18); Adeline is "very pretty . . . , but never seems to think about it."<sup>22</sup> They are also similar in their character and intelligence: it is Adeline's peculiar gift, like Emma's, that she can secretly win others.<sup>23</sup> And each carries her devotion to her progenitor to the point of refusing to marry until her fiance promises to live at his father-in-law's house.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, while the Baronne dedicates herself to Adeline's education and rules her with an iron hand, affirming that a child governing a parent (or a wife ruling her husband) constitutes a sort of "usurpation. . . naturally odious,"<sup>25</sup> Emma, as we have said, has provided at Hartfield since she was twelve (off. I, 37).

However, the parallels between characters in the two novels are found not only between Adeline and Emma. In some episodes Harriet Smith is placed in situations similar to some of Adeline's, with Emma playing the role the Baronne d'Auberte, Adeline's mother, performs in the French novel. Thus, for instance, just as Harriet confesses to Emma that she has been keeping "most precious treasures" related to Mr

<sup>22</sup>See de Senlis, *Adeline and Theodore or Letters on Education* (London: T. Cadell, 1744) Vol. I, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup>Senlis, Vol. I, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup>Off. Emma, p. 447; *Adeline and Theodore*, Vol. III, pp. 202-3.

<sup>25</sup>Senlis, Vol. I, p. 135.

Edna, and disposes of them in her presence (II, 127-88), Adelaide, following her mother's hint, decides to fight against "the slightest inclination" toward a young man, and then relinquishes to her mother a "pretty son" containing "remembrances" of the young man.<sup>11</sup> However, while in *Adolphe* Mrs. d'Aulnois rejoices in this new evidence of her success as educator, in *Edna* the heroine is shocked by this evidence of her misdirection of Harriet's affections, for Mr. Elton has not only intelligently rejected Harriet, but also shown his strong moral values.

Furthermore, the pedagogic relationship between the heroine and her daughter can be compared not only to that between Edna and Harriet, but also to the one Knightley had with Edna in her childhood.<sup>12</sup> This comparison is suggested in the episode in which Edna alludes to the French novel in a conversation about Mrs. Weston's newborn girl. Mrs. Weston, having been Edna's governess, "has had the advantage of practicing on me," says Edna, "like in *Bernard d'Almeida* on la

<sup>11</sup>Deville, Vol. III, p. 188.

<sup>12</sup>The fact that the role of Adelaide is played alternately by Edna and Harriet, while that of Mrs. d'Aulnois is sometimes taken by Edna and sometimes by Mr. Knightley, shows one aspect of the complex network of relationships between Edna and the French novel. We may apply to these relationships Lubbock's description of the universalistic nature of parody as classical satirizing: "Parodying is the creation of a *disordering double*: it is that 'new world turned inside out'; 'various images (for example, carnival pairs of various sorts) periodized one another variously and from various points of view,' creating 'an entire system of crossed mirrors, misapprehensions, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees' (202, p. 222).

continue "Cecilia, in Madame de Genlis' *Adelais* and Theodore, and we shall now see her own little *Adelais* educated on a more perfect plan." This allusion introduces Knightley's successful repudiation of his own role with regard to Emma's personal growth. While the Baroness never questions the rightness of her advising her friend and her niece abundantly to watch and punish their children<sup>31</sup> and of her warning them against "spoiling a child, and indulging all its whims,"<sup>32</sup> Mr Knightley finally recognizes that his own stern attitude of the past, his interference in Emma's education, "was quite as likely to do harm as good." Emma's protest that she has benefited from "the assistance of all your endeavours to counteract the influence of other people" moves Mr Knightley to resignation:

"How often, when you were a girl, have you said to me, with one of your angry looks--'Mr Knightley, I am going to do so and so, papa says I may,' or 'I have Miss Taylor's leave'--something which, you know, I did not approve. In such cases my interference was giving you two bad feelings instead of one." (E, 442)

The last sentence is a clear echo of the Baroness' view that if a child is allowed to compensate for submission to her mother by becoming even more intractable with others, then "instead of curing her of one vice you only make her guilty

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<sup>31</sup>See, for instance, her recommendations of constant vigilance of children and not sparing them punishment on Vol. I, p. 214.

<sup>32</sup>*Genlis*, Vol. II, p. 84.

of some.<sup>42</sup> The two passages, each showing a child relating alternately to a sister and to more lenient adults, are perfectly corresponding instances of each other; while the heroine recommends strongly studying an "impeccable mind," Mr Knightley is proposing non-interference, admitting that his "disagreeable" lectures to Emma were self-defeating: "I do not believe I did you any good" (II, 442).<sup>43</sup> Children, Mr Knightley has come to realize, ought to be given principles and then allowed to exercise their own good sense, even if the "self-correcting" process entails their making mistakes along the way.

And yet, hasn't Emma learned from Knightley's lectures, even as an adult, most notably during the famous outing to Box Hill? This episode shows a striking resemblance to one in which Elizabeth joins in a joke against her governess, Miss Bingley; let us briefly recount the two episodes, in order to compare attitudes toward the heroine's moral education in each novel. In Box Hill, her vanity flattered by Frank Churchill's attentions, Emma has misapprehended her wit, cruelly making fun of the astrophysically dull but kindly, loving Miss Bates. Drawing her aside, Mr Knightley soon more reproves her, "I

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<sup>42</sup>Scott, Vol. I, p. 218.

<sup>43</sup>Because of its explicit ideologic content, this "echo" of the French novel in *Jane* would be more properly classified as what Bakhtin calls "hidden polemic" than as either simple allusion or parody. In addition to the episode's own "referential meaning" within the novel, "a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme. . . ." (PDP, 124).

cannot see you acting wrong without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates?" Emma first replies that Miss Bates probably "did not understand us," and then argues that Miss Bates deserves to be laughed at, for "what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her." Mr. Knightley reveals that Miss Bates "has felt your full meaning," and then acknowledges her weakness, but replies that her poverty

"should secure your compassion. It was badly done indeed!--yes, when she had known from an infant, when she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humiliate her. . . This is not pleasant to you, Emma--and it is very bad from politeness to me! but I ask, I will-- I will tell you truths while I can." (II, 275-6)

Emma's reactions "of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern" is immediate. As she rides home, Emma is grieved "for having taken so leave of him"; she is also fully contrite. "How could she have been so brutal, so cruel toward Miss Bates! . . ." (II, 276). Although it is implied she seldom cries, Emma feels "tears running down her face almost all the way home." That evening she resolves "to call upon [Miss Bates] the very next morning": "If attention, in nature, could do away the past, she might hope to be forgiven" (II, 277).

In *Adriana and Theodore*, the girl is guilty of putting a portrait of the Emperor's companion, when Miss Bridges is made to resemble, in her own chamber, where the government will see it and feel offended, when the Emperor's representative

suggesting that she "had got out of ill-nature," Adelaide replies that Miss Bridget is wrong "to mind what people say about [her] person." Mrs O'Mahony, however, remarks that Miss Bridget's weakness does not justify Adelaide's ridicule. The baroness then affirms that Miss Bridget has felt wounded by Adelaide's offence:

Now, who can friendship, respect, gratitude to Miss Bridget, you make her uneasy, you laugh at that which gives her pain, and you wish to make her appear ridiculous. If you were a few years older, this fault, which is a very serious one, would prove at the same time that you had a bad heart, and that you wanted understanding. At these words Adelaide burst into tears.—Ah, mama, how shall I repair my fault! . . . In showing Miss Bridget a sincere repentance.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Adelaide resolves to seek herself from then on to obtain Miss Bridget's pardon.

From this summary of the two episodes the following parallels can be drawn. Both start with the heroine ridiculing an older, single woman of limited means both and when the heroine resolves to gain the older woman's pardon by repeatedly showing her affectionate deference in the future, but first the heroine's mother intervenes to reproach her for her act. Her defence refers to a weakness of the object of mockery. The mother's rebuttal includes the following arguments: a) the victim's flaw does not justify the heroine's cruelty, b) the victim has been wounded in her feelings, c) the longstanding parental relationship between heroine and

<sup>17</sup> *Emma*, Vol. I, p. 188.

victim is a circumstance aggravating the fault committed. The last argument is dealt on, playing upon the heroine's guilty feelings, the fear of appearing to disadvantage in the social's eyes increases her remorse, and she weeps.

In both novels, furthermore, the dad's seems to have been supported by the mother, who sees his/parent as totally unselfish, but appears unconsciously moved by more than concern for the heroine's moral welfare. The additional motivation, in the case of Mrs d'Auleno, may be her reinforced tendency to prove her power over her daughter: in the case of Mr Knightley, it may be his need to assert his authority to Emma at a time when Frank seems to be gaining ground with her. As he will later come to realize, if his many interventions in the past did any good, "The good we will to spend, by making you an object of too-dearest affection to me. . ." (E, 442). There are important differences, however, between the two episodes, say Mrs d'Auleno, unlike Mr Knightley, never gains any such insight into herself, nor does Mrs de Greville seem to think she should.

We may conclude that while Adelaide's mother reaffirms her parental attitude after the "Emperor Napoleon" episode, for Mr Knightley the box will incidentally represent the last paternal lecture he will address to Emma: after he proposes to Emma and is accepted by her, he hopes their relationship will be based on equal "truth and sincerity with each other" (E, 444). Emma, on the other hand, shares his aspiration but

also realises, with the narrator, that "wisdom, very wisdom, does complete truth belong to any human discerner; wisdom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken. . ." (E. 415). Although Emma finally realises Mr Knightley's appraisal of many situations (notably the desirability of Harriet's marrying Mr Martin) has been correct, she soon shows she will not rely on her future husband's infallibility. Thus, she laughingly doubts Mr Knightley's report that Harriet has accepted Mr Martin, supposing that Knightley has, "in the confusion of so many subjects," mistaken Mr Martin's words: "It was not Harriet's hand that he was certain of—it was the dimensions of some towns as." When Mr Knightley protests against her supposing his "as great a blockhead," she insists, rather than retracting, "you must give us a plain, direct answer." It is now established both that Mr Knightley's report is correct, and that Emma will not trust his word implicitly, but will always reserve the right to judge for herself (E. 473-4).<sup>18</sup>

Emma, it would seem, tends to regard the pedagogic role as general, and the figure of the educator here as the

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<sup>18</sup>Marjorie Butler interprets this incident very differently. She presents it as evidence that, even after Emma has improved through submission to Mr Knightley, she occasionally "slides back from [a] . . . clearer moral perception" (*Jane Austen and the Way of Emma*, p. 189). Butler does not explain why Emma's considering the possibility Mr Knightley might have mistaken Mr Martin's meaning constitutes cloudy moral perception.



Marion's mother in particular, is an ironic light.<sup>21</sup> Emma learns from her own reflections on her experiences, aided, but not deterred, by the principles she has been taught: as he reminds himself, Mr Knightley's penchant for lecturing her has been little more than meddling (MF, 2, 142). By the end of the novel he seems to be closer than at the beginning to a view expressed by another of Austen's heroines, Elizabeth Bennet: "We all love to instruct, though we can teach only what is not worth knowing" (EP, 242). His changed views underscore the ways in which the novel's dialogue with *Adelaida* and *Theodore* serves to discredit the conventional morality of idealized filial devotion and feminine subordination to both parents and husband. Furthermore, the contrast between the two works provides further evidence of Mr Knightley's fallibility.

#### Conventionalized Fictional Language

In addition to parody of specific works, Austen uses other forms of dialogue with literary language in Emma, incorporating the characters' tendency to view their experiences through the filter of fictionalizations. As Mary Lambillon remarks, commenting on Emma's denials regarding what she supposes to be Harriet Smith's noble parentage and Jane

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<sup>21</sup>Among these critical works that present Mr Knightley's guidance of Emma in a positive light we might mention Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the Man of Letters*, pp. 202-04, Alistair McDermott's *The Invention of the Heroine*, pp. 140-78, Wayne C. Booth's "Control of Distance in Jane Austen's *Emma*," in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 243-48, and Mark Schorer's "The Novelization of Emma Woodhouse," in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 98-112.

Fairfax's love for Mr. Dixon, "such a young woman as Emma . . . could have known acquainted with illegitimacy as an interesting situation, sufficiently as a comic incident, only in her reading."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Emma sees herself both as Harriet's fairy godmother, deciding to "improve her" by keeping her away from her old former friends and introducing her "into good society" (II, 12), and as her mentor, a baronne d'Almeida to Harriet's costume d'Almeida, for she will also strive to improve "her little friend's mind by . . . useful reading and conversation" (II, 14). She also sees herself as Harriet's knightly savior from the assault, not of giants or vipers, but of the Martins as satanic, social-distancing equated Emma "did suspect danger to her poor little friend from all [the Martins'] hospitality and kindness--and that, if she were not taken care of, she might be required to sink herself forever" (II, 28). In addition to Cinderella, *Madama and Thaddeus and Quixote*,<sup>43</sup> Emma draws upon Emma in her view of Harriet's future, for she wants her to marry, first, Mr. Dixon, and later Frank Churchill, men whose social standing is higher than Harriet. The novel's ironic view of such attempts will be evident when all of Emma's plans for Harriet come to naught. In Emma we come to see an ironic way not by

<sup>42</sup>Mary Lamb, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup>The influence of the quixotic theme on Emma, whether through direct influence by Cervantes, or mediated, or both, is not surprising. As Robert Pennock, "The English comic novel is permeated through and through with the spirit of Cervantes" (DN, 218).

characters of what Bakhtin would call a "double-voiced discourse of patches" derived from romances (BK, 134).

Emma is not the only character who interprets her world through fictionalizations. Harriet herself, as we have seen, has kept a box of souvenirs, of objects associated with the man she loves, much as *Madame* did. In addition, Harriet at least twice constructs other situations she is living through as episodes of sentimental fiction. The first instance occurs when she cannot bear to have anyone read the little romance Emma has convinced her is Mr Elton's covert declaration of love; Emma herself must argue her out of such "coarseness" and "refinements" (E, 71). Emma's behavior in this episode shows her awareness of the indeterminacies of novel-ordered aspirations to *logos*: as Bakhtin says, romances aimed to teach such idealizations of everyday life, providing a discourse opposed "to vulgar discourse and its coarse ways" (BK, 134). The irony, of course, is also aimed at Emma, who can see Quixotic tendencies in Harriet, but not in herself. In the second case, Harriet avers she "will never marry," since she is in love with a man so infinitely superior "to all the rest of the world;" she has not "the presumption to suppose" he will ever return her love (E, 105). (At this point, Emma, thinking she is referring to Frank, counters Harriet's ideal-life-long-devotion motif with a restatement of the *genua*-fiction, raising Harriet's hopes by saying, "there have been matches of greater disparity"--E, 106.)

Similarly, Frank Churchill's letter explaining himself to Mrs Weston is full of romanticisms: one example is his assertion that if Jane had refused to enter into a secret engagement with him, he would have gone mad (II, 437).

This use of the language and assumptions of sentimental fiction is not limited to young women and romantic young men, however. Mr Knightley himself most touchingly makes up a fictionalization of his own when he attempts to console Jane for what he thinks is her broken heart over Frank's engagement: "Till, my dearest Jane, till you feel the wound . . . miserable soundrill!" His description of his own feelings of "bitter anxiety for her" bears the stamp of sentimental fiction: the "literariness of his extra-literary language"<sup>28</sup> is evident when he reports (in free indirect speech) that he had come "to see how this sweetest and best of all creatures, beautiful in spite of all her faults, bore the distress" (II, 413). He even fictionalizes Jane Fairfax's future as Frank's wife, speaking before Jane, "Jane, Jane, you will be a miserable creature" (II, 418). The narrator's ironic view of Mr Knightley's fictionalizations is evident in the mocking conclusion to the chapter, summarizing the actions

[Mr Knightley] had found [Jane] agitated and low. - Frank Churchill was a villain, - he heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate, - she was his own Jane, by hard and work, when they returned

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bakhtin's discussion of "the extra-generic literariness of language" for which chivalric romance became a vehicle (CF, 311-4).

into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill there, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow. [E, 412]

This entire chapter is full of similar ironies: the caretaker's voice becomes more evidently paradoxical when she reveals that Emma had not "the nervous of sentiment" nor the "simple nobility" of refusing Mr Knightley because her friend Bertram loved him (E, 411). A similar intention to mock the elegant coherence of novelistic episodes of proposal can be found in the famous narration of Emma's response to Mr Knightley, "What did she say? Just what she ought, of course; A lady always does" (E, 411). The merging of irony and emotional restraint in this passage illustrates clearly Bakhtin's assertion that novelistic genres, "if it is authentic, stays away from a discourse that is gaily sentimental, not yet separated from its subject" (DB, 218). Nevertheless, the fact that even Mr Knightley's dialogue is romanticizations would seem to suggest that, in Austen's view, the effect of novels on our understanding of the world is much wider and perhaps more irreparable than it would at first appear.

#### Conventional Language: Scripts and Frames

In addition to their use of categories derived from fictional literature, Austen's characters understand their world through certain conventions we will call, using concepts developed by cognitive psychologists, scripts and frames. Frames are prototypical abstractions that shape our expectations about objects and situations and thus allow us

to organize and conceptualize our experience.<sup>32</sup> Scripts are similar schemata, with an added dynamic feature: Robert Maltin defines script as "a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer."<sup>33</sup>

The concepts of scripts and frames would at first sight seem more closely related to what Bakhtin calls "centripetal forces" in language, leading to ideological uniformity, seeking to insure "a measure of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (DB, 171), than to their opposite, the centrifugal forces of heterogeneity,<sup>34</sup> or multi-linguacity, that may give rise to dialogues. Indeed, psychologists and discourse analysts using the concepts tend to disregard socio-political diversity and conflict, dwelling

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<sup>32</sup>For a broader discussion of frames, see M. A. Minisky, "A Framework for Representing Knowledge," *The Psychology of Learning Vision*, ed. P. Winston (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971). Minisky defines frame as "a data-structure for representing a stereotyped situation, like being in a certain kind of living room, or going to a child's birthday party. Attached to the frame are several kinds of information. Some of this information is about how to use the frame. Some is about what one can expect to happen next. Some is about what to do if these expectations are not confirmed" (p. 111).

<sup>33</sup>Robert P. Maltin, "Script Processing in Attitude Formation and Decision Making," in *Basic Processes in Reading*, eds. David Leshare and S. J. Shantez (Orlando, FL: Academic Press Associates, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup>By this term, Bakhtin means the socio-ideological plurality of languages existing in a culture at a given time, "languages of social groups," i. e. classes, genders, age groups, etc., "professional and generic languages, languages of generations," the historically-grounded diversity of spoken and written poems in a linguistic community at a historical moment (DB, 172).

easily as "beliefs, norms and attitudes" as either personal or "shared by a whole group, community, or culture."<sup>28</sup>

And yet, as we shall see, the whiteness by the novel's characters of conventional, scientific-sounding labels and social norms, which we will refer to as scripts and frames, is used by Austen ironically. In this sense, the text enters into dialogue with conventional languages, laughing at them as inescapable, indeed indispensable but often commonplace conceptions of the world that may tend to universalize the good, turning people into ludicrous automata and self-important fools. Therefore the novel shows an awareness of "the elastic environment of other alien words" existing "between the word and the speaking subject" (28, 274). Austen's "word" as engaged in what Bakhtin would call "a dialogue as a living rejoinder" (28, 278) to the speaking subject's alienation, or, to put it differently, the commonplace of conventional, dominant languages.

The character who most often and evidently uses conventional frames is Mrs Elton, who clings to clichés ("Bury is the garden of England" --E, 271) as to dogma and holds ludicrously stereotyped views of the proper way of "exploring" about the country-side (cf. E, 234), or the need for hennins, baskets and dunks as the "apparatus of happiness" for strawberry-gathering (cf. E, 287-8, 288). She is also much given to using what Bakhtin calls "outgrouped

<sup>28</sup>See Dijk, p. 242.

scripts," or the understanding of situations as generic types determining a form of behavior.<sup>42</sup> Thus, she insists that married women "are too apt to give up music" (E, 277), converting the cliché into a self-fulfilling prophecy. She even employs the more complex "hypothetical scripts," in which two or more alternatives and their consequences are contemplated,<sup>43</sup> when she refers to women "who have no resources" and so need "the world . . . , parties, balls, plays," while those who like her maid have "extensive resources" are "quite independent" (E, 374-7).

As critics have repeatedly pointed out, many of Mrs. Elton's failings appear in less evident or less vulgar form in Emma: the use of scripts is no exception. In her lectures to Harriet from after *Emma* to both the categorical ("A woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked. . . ."--E, 84) and the hypothetical varieties ("I lay it down as a general rule, Harriet, that if a woman doubts as to whether she should accept a man or not, she certainly ought to refuse him"--E, 84). Sometimes the similarity between Mrs. Elton's use of a categorical script to insist a signal to Emma's application of one of her own, in a case of "practical application" like the ones discussed above.

Such is the case in the episode in which Mrs. Elton visits Hartfield for the first time. Mrs. Elton's effusions about

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Keweenaw, pp. 22, 27.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Keweenaw, p. 27.



Hartfield lead her to perceive her sister and brother-in-law will "be enchanted with it"; she then offers a categorized script. "People who have extensive grounds themselves are always pleased with any thing in the same style." Emma, who realizes such people care "very little for the extensive grounds of any body else," decides this "double-dyed" arrow is worth to disclose the grandeur of Mrs Elton's relatives, the Dashwoods.<sup>41</sup> As soon as Mrs Elton leaves, Emma mentally explodes:

"Disgraceful woman! . . . Absolutely insufferable . . . Much beyond my hopes! Harriet is disgraced by her comparison. Oh! what would Frank Churchill say to her, if he were here? . . . Ah, then I am -thinking of him directly. Always the first person to be thought of! Now I catch myself out! Frank Churchill comes so regularly into my mind!" (B, 279)

In addition to other lenses used at Emma (she unwittingly confesses she had "hopes" of Mrs Elton being insufferable, probably in order to convince Mr Elton's poor judgment), Emma's "catching herself out" is nearly as double-dyed as water as Mrs Elton's. Emma is mentally playing the novelistic rule as a woman sincerely in love with the aid of a categoric script about people we love as "Always the first to be thought of."

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<sup>41</sup>Mrs Elton's discourse, like Harriet's or Miss Bates', is heavily mislaid, indeed caricatured. Such "heavy shadows" of traits the author wishes to highlight in a character's speech are typical of what Volosinov calls "paraphrased direct discourse." In this type of report, "the referential weight of the reported utterance declines . . . but . . . characterological significance (and) picturesqueness . . . grow more extensive" (Volosinov, p. 224).

Thus in *Ease* there is no evidence of using discourse in a self-serving way similar to Mrs. Elton's.

Throughout the narrative, we encounter other uses of scripts by *Ease*, such as her ironic invocation of common views on old maids (E, 24).<sup>22</sup> The reader gradually realizes that scripts are almost always used ironically, either by characters or by the novelist; this tendency can be applied to refute criticism of Austen's lack of awareness of social injustice, purportedly shown in *Ease*'s visit to the sick cottager.<sup>23</sup> When *Ease* says, "if we feel for the wretched, enough to do all we can for them, the rest is empty sympathy, only dissembling to ourselves" (E, 27), the apparent well-meant logic of this script is countered by the fact that *Ease*

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<sup>22</sup>I do not agree with Julie Freville Brown (cf. Jane Austen's *Florida*, p. 114) and other critics who think *Ease* seriously means her comment about old maids who are poor being "the proper sort of boys and girls"; her immediately adding that "a single woman of good fortune" is believed to be "respectable... reasonable and pleasant" leads one to conclude she must be referring ironically to the influence of money on the public's view of unmarried women. Her hint that "the distinction" between old maids with and without money is "not quite so much against the candour and common sense of the world as appears at first" tends to support the impression that she is speaking ironically. The defanged script *Ease* utters next, however, may indeed be intended as an irony speech act; even *Ease* has to admit that her idea that "a very narrow income [tends] to contract the mind and wear the temper" is not confirmed in Miss Bates' case (E, 24). As Julie Freville Brown points out, *Ease*'s "willingness to allow [poor spinsters] to be 'illiberal and cross' is an extension of her contempt" (p. 112). But *Ease*'s sarcasm is not quite as strong as some think; the text's ironies are well-layered and very complex.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Leonard Kistler, *An Introduction to the English Novel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 81-2.

is invoking it in order to indulge her witchmaking fantasies about Mr Elton, who has just appeared. Also, as Julia Fawcett Brown says, Mrs's being "very compassionate" toward the poor and sick is ironically contrasted to her hard-hearted attitude toward Jane Fairfax, who, she admits, "lives us to death" (I, 30).<sup>42</sup>

But Mrs and Mr Elton are not the only characters who use scripts and frames. Mr Knightley himself often resorts to scripts, as when he concludes that Frank, as "a young man brought up by those who are proud, luxurious and selfish" must have all the same failings (I, 145); is the author of Frank's pride, at least, Mr Knightley proves to be wrong. He is also wrong about "vigour and resolution" being all a man needs to do his duty; Frank does need "maneuvering and dissimulating" in order to do what his soul does not like, whether it is his duty or his pleasure.

There are collective as well as individual uses of frames and scripts. Eli of Highbury sings the praises of "the handsome letter Mrs Weston had received" from Frank Churchill on the occasion of her marriage (I, 18); Mr Woodhouse uses the elicited frame when reporting Highbury news to his daughter, Isabella (I, 38). Mr Woodhouse, furthermore, very often refers to categorical scripts, such as the one we have discussed regarding young ladies' need to take care of themselves because they "are delicate persons" (I, 134). Moreover, the

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Julia Fawcett Brown, *Jane Austen's Elton*, p. 118.

old man's frequent invocation of satirical scripts about good etiquette is the source of very interesting issues. Mr Woodhouse does not realize that the attitude he observes with the naïveté of a clockwork doll in a child's pantomime have any meaning, or serve any purpose beyond the satisfaction they give from the familiarity of old use. Therefore, he cannot understand how when she tells him that his observations of the satirical script that "a bride . . . is always the first in company, let the others be who they may!" might lead to more marriages, since "It is encouraging people to marry if you make so much of them." For him, his deference to brides is "mere common politeness and good-breeding and has nothing to do with any encouragement . . . to marry." Emma's criticisms on such forms of courtesy as "the vanity/tricks for poor young ladies!" surely make her father nervous (8, 140). And as Emma once more defers to his comfort and drops the matter, leaving it to the reader to reflect on whether such social customs might have some influence on her vanity as much as on any other young lady's and move her toward matrimony.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>This passage should be placed alongside that other, during the ball at the Crown, where "Emma went round to shed second to Mrs Elton, though she had always considered the ball as peculiarly for her. It was almost enough to make her think of marrying" (8, 121). Both passages appear to have the same ironic flavor of Elizabeth Bennet's father joke about her love for Betsy working when she was his beautiful estate, Pemberley. Social prominence to Emma (to a lower degree than being mistress of Pemberley as a consolation to her future poverty for Elizabeth), or, I believe, a strong but imaginary temptation that would fade as soon as life with a man she doesn't love were contemplated, just as the temptation of being mistress of Eliphalet Bellin fades for Anne Elliot when she

The need for such "waxing-beaker" in a society where marriage can be very onerous to women is another reflection we may derive from this passage. On this basis, we may wonder whether the narrator's envisioned dialogue with dominant languages is not sometimes overpowered by the force of this dominance. For the novel, after all, deals not with *Anna* marriage. With regard to women's situation, or to the ideology of class and social mobility, we may wonder whether the "dialectic nature of language," the "struggle among socio-linguistic points of view" to which Nabokov refers (SN, 273), does not most often end in women's victory for the present. In order to explore these issues, especially the question of whether the text prescribes marriage as the sole social rule for women or requires discussion idealizing marriage as a mythification, we need to make use of other theoretical tools, to serve as complements to Nabokov's for the study of women's relation to power.

### Women and Social Power

Such a query about the novel's attitude to what Nabokov himself would call married women's "fulfilling the duties of her station" immediately leads to the reflection that literature plays a dual ideological function. As Elizabeth Langland puts it, literary language both "reproduces the

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imagines herself married to Mr. Elisei. But for *Anna* and Elizabeth such understandings may become sources of additional satisfaction as soon as they are in love.

ideology" and "represents material conditions that expose that issue in the ideology . . ."<sup>45</sup> In this section I will apply some of Langford's findings as her investigation, from the perspective of Foucault's "discursive practices,"<sup>46</sup> into the depiction of themselves' social and political function in nineteenth-century literature. As we shall see, although Langford's corpus was made up of Victorian novels and documents, many of her observations are applicable to texts with some modifications. I will use both Langford's analysis and some of Foucault's conceptions in order to discuss this novel's treatment of the issues of women and power.

#### The Power of Middle-Class Housewives

Langford began by observing that in Victorian society, in spite of prevailing ideology which "held the home as home, a private sphere opposed to the public, commercial sphere . . . , the home and its mistress served as a significant adjunct to a man's commercial endeavor" (p. 2). Arguing against the views of such critics as Mary Poovey and Nancy Armstrong,<sup>47</sup> who ground their analyses on the assumption that "the home and women's lives [were] ~~entirely~~ *entirely*,

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<sup>45</sup>Langford, "Nobody's Angels," p. 23. Further references to this work will be marked by page number.

<sup>46</sup>Id., especially, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>47</sup>Id. Mary Poovey, *Uneven Development: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). And Nancy Armstrong, *Domination and Domestic Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

divorced from the public sphere" (p. 4). Langford holds that middle-class women "controlled significant discursive practices" which led to the "dissemination of certain knowledge," and "thus secured a middle-class hegemony in mid-Victorian England" (p. 1). In her study of discursive practices by which a middle-class wife would "guarantee her husband's place in society" (p. 3), Langford focuses on strategies to manage lower-class dissent and mastery of rituals for status display. Several of these strategies and rituals are important aspects of Emma's activities as mistress of Hartfield, by which she played the social and political function of a middle-class housewife. Emma, it is true, believes the workhouse's singular position as the center one family in pre- or near-industrial Highbury to be undesirable. At most, she might have to put an upstairs in a higher place; she need not strive to uphold a relation of equality among other middle-class wealth lines or of acceptance by aristocrats, as the typical middle-class Victorian would do. However, the fact that she can be shown to be using strategies and rituals similar to those employed by Dickens' Esther Summerson in *Great Expectations*, or by Austen's Mrs. Elton in *Pride and Prejudice* (pp. 11-12) provides evidence that she is being drawn into a struggle she seems to be beneath her.

As strategies for regulating the behavior of the lower classes Emma uses both the management of her servants and philanthropy. We have already discussed Emma's visit to the

sick employer, and the narrator's ironic rendering of her self-justified language. We also find an instance of the Woodhouses' relations with servants when both Tom and Mr Woodhouse show an interest in getting their carriage-driver's daughter (a "civil-pretty-quiet girl" as related that she never even bangs a door) established as maid at Mandella, a "good place" that luckily was secured so that "poor Anna," her father, would not "think himself slighted on any account" (II, 71).<sup>17</sup> Tom apparently played a role in teaching James' daughter the right manner for a housemaid when she employed her to do needlework. At the opposite extreme to this maid we find the (by British standards) nearly-unsocialized "party of gipsies" who harbor Marxist faith (cf. II, 161-5). Their attack is largely based on Miss Richardson's flight, her lacking the firmness necessary to control these hoppers. It's clear that Tom, the able manager of Bartfield's servants, would never have been guilty of Miss Richardson's "abominable folly" (II, 165). Langens's observation of how middle-class households developed a model "for relations between masters and servants" which was then "applied outside [the household] to rich and poor" (p. 16) is clearly relevant in Tom's case.

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<sup>17</sup>Mr Woodhouse's constant concern for James and his wife is mirrored elsewhere in the novel, when the father evidently uses his concern as a pretext to avoid going out. When James' servants are sent to fetch and carry Mr Woodhouse's "second set" of friends to Bartfield for card-playing "Mr Woodhouse thought it no hardship for either James or the horses" (II, 160).



Emma not only performs a role of social regulation in her relations to her servants; she also seems to exhibit her mastery of rituals for status display in her smooth handling of every aspect of her household. Indeed she is a most efficient mistress, keeping, for instance, her control over her housekeeper "in so regular a train" that she can only feel mortified for Mrs Elton's using such duties as an excuse to neglect her house (II, 114). Emma's superiority over Mrs Elton is visibly evident in the contrast between the former's restraint and the latter's vulgar excesses of finery in dress (ib. II, 44). Mrs Elton, on the other hand, seems caught between the contradictory desires to see the "simplicity in elegance" discourses of the high-middle class<sup>10</sup> and to indulge in a profusion of pearls and other trimmings in her gowns; the pull of these opposite forces is evident when she tells Jane, "Nobody ever thinks less of dress as general than I do--and upon such an occasion as this, when everybody's eyes are so much upon us, and in compliment to the Festivals--we are no doubt giving this ball chiefly to do us honour--I would not wish to be inferior to others." (II, 124) Although Emma is too clever to fall into Mrs Elton's blatant contradictions, the tension between social usage and rhetoric is revealed by Mrs Bates, who at the same ball complacently

<sup>10</sup>This discourse is still in force in George Eliot's *Madam Barchin*, which, as Langford observes, "opens with the significance of dress as a social signifier." For Derwenton and Julia "friggery" was "the ambition of a huckster's daughter" (ib. p. 10).

Esau on her appearance by acknowledging that she "flatt not compliment, I know. -- that would be rude--but upon my word, Miss Woodhouse, you do look--" (II, 187). If it is rude to compliment, it is partly because the fiction that no effort was made over dress and hairdressing must be maintained against all evidence.

Another ideological contradiction is found between the image of the middle-class housewife as mischievous angel and her role in securing the social standing of her family. This conflict is as evident in Esau's case as is that of Elizabeth's Mrs. Elton, who in her zeal to "manage the class issue" subverts her rational "sense to the overturning of long-established pleasures and customs in her husband's life" (Langford, p. 131). Similarly, Esau, who sentimentalizes her own devotion to her father to the point of weeping "as a sin of thought" over the idea of quitting him to get married (II, 434), does not hesitate to persuade him, who hates change, to use a "large, modern circular table" instead of the old, small pedestal he has liked on for forty years (II, 187).

Esau is also highly proficient in her role as hostess, providing over dinners and other social functions for which she furnishes abundant delicacies. She sees the dinners she provides for her "assorted set" of friends, for instance, as almost feudal patronage, awards to loyal vassals who pay homage to her father (II, 11, 12). The ultimate irony of her situation is that she, who feels so much above the competition

between the Colies, the Ferrys and the Eltons as pre-Victorian social outsiders, is being unwittingly assimilated into it. Emma's blindness becomes evident when she contemplates using another one of the rituals for status display mentioned by Langland, the social out. Emma initially assumes that the social-climbing Colies "could hardly presume to invite" the Eltons she considers "regular and best." At first Emma regrets the Colies might not understand her out, for "her father's known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish." Gradually, this regret turns into anxiety when everyone is invited but the Woodhouses. The loss of her best friends gathering at the Colies changes her mind so much that "when the insult came at last, it found her very differently affected." Pretending to be ready to decline the long-awaited invitation, Emma finally lets herself be talked into accepting (II, 167-8). In this case her loss of company triumphs over her snobbery: this outcome cannot obscure the reader's impression that Emma, while feeling no superior, is actually in danger of becoming socially involved. The narrator's assessment over Emma's mistaken perceptions is firmly restrained and evident in the following passage:

Emma did not regret her misadventure in going to the Colies. The visit afforded her very pleasant recollections the next day; and all she might be supposed to have lost in the mode of dignified reluctance, must be amply repaid in the splendour of popularity. She must have delighted the Colies-- witty people, who deserved to be made happy!--and left a name behind her that would not soon die away. (II, 211)

if a decision of grandeur is a requisite part of the proper attitude for the powerful, Emma is well-equipped to lead. However, she will need to hold her own against Mrs. Elton, whose independence is quite as active.

In spite of Emma's self-deception, there is no doubt that she can and does participate in the struggle for status. As long as she does not feel forced to act the part of class queen, she manages her servants, household consumption and charities efficiently enough to bolster her family's prestige. That she does it in a seemingly effortless manner only underscores her pretentiousness: indeed her powers seem superior to her role, which leads to pose a new problem, that of Emma's surplus of ability.

#### Emma's Needs and Social Role

Having established the fact that Emma recognizes housewives' socio-political function, we may now address the issue of women's needs in relation to their personal and public roles as they are shown in the novel. Although Emma executes her tasks to perfection, the text does not seem to endorse her social objectives. The reader is invited, it would seem, to view ironically the public role provided for middle-class women. Her stress on hierarchy is one of the recurring points of contention with Mr. Knightley, who represents the equalizing bonds of community rather than social differences. Thus, while balancing his activity as a capitalist "gentleman farmer" with his nearby feudal concerns

with protecting impoverished neighbors like Miss Bates, he tries to include as many of his friends as he can in his definition of "gentlemen and ladies." Miss Bates herself represents communal theory<sup>17</sup> as Julie Fawcett Brown puts it, "all classes join and cooperate in her . . . . Her small apartment joins the older gentry (the Woodhouses and Knightleys), the new rich (the Chancys), and the lower-middle to lower-class townspeople and clerks. . . ." <sup>18</sup> This relative blindness to class distinctions appears as a positive attitude that can only be undermined by a decrease of status. And yet no social-political or professional role is proposed for women as an alternative to the defense of the family's status. Does the novel, then, advocate an exercise of power for women? Is the proper course for them to accept women's traditional position of subordination and subjection to men?

The issue of women's relation to power is of central importance in the novel. For one thing, it is posed early in the argument between them and Mr Knightley about Harriet Smith's rejection of Mr Martin's proposal, a conflict that will recur throughout the novel. Once this issue is noted, its relevance to other episodes becomes evident, especially

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<sup>17</sup>As has been repeatedly pointed out, both Miss Bates and Mr Woodhouse have long acknowledged a very important consideration that social standing. Thus, for instance, Miss Bates appreciates William Larkins as "such an old acquaintance" (E, 121) with almost the same degree of deference shown by Mr Knightley, who "could not ill spare" his (E, 122).

<sup>18</sup>Julie Fawcett Brown, *Emma*, p. 147.

re motivation for Emma's subject. The argument between Mr Knightley and Emma both illuminates some aspects of the issue and reveals limitations in perception in both characters.

According to Emma, Harriet is too good for Mr Martin; this cockshut position she will ultimately reverse. She also holds that her friend can aspire to a man in a higher social position, such as Mr Elton. In discussing this point Emma and Mr Knightley show different conceptions of what motivates one in choosing a wife. Both men aware of the role played by a need for power in this choice, but they differ in their assessment of the type of power sought by men. While Emma believes men seek primarily the sense of power provided by having it over a weak wife, Mr Knightley holds that "men of sense . . . do not want silly wives," and that Mr Elton is mostly interested in the economic and social power provided by a poorer woman's good fortune (cf. E 48-49).

To explicate these differences, and to see its relevance to other episodes in the novel, we may use Foucault's catalogue of three techniques or forms of social power: as "discipline (ethics, politics, and religious)," as "exploitation (separating) individuals from what they produce," and as "that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others" by producing a subjectivity prone to submission.<sup>12</sup> In

<sup>12</sup>Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Richard Rorty, ed., *Discourse, Power, and the Subject*, ed. Robert L. Rorty and Paul Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 119.

these terms, Emma considers the subjective power of having a woman submit a sufficient condition saving a man to propose; Mr Knightley, on the other hand, denies that submissiveness has any attraction for men (at least when carried to the point of silliness), and holds that the forces of social and economic power favour female domination and exploitation are the only relevant inducements when one such as Mr Elton chooses a wife.

As it turns out, both are partly right and partly wrong. For Mr Elton will not be drawn to Emma's pretensions to submissiveness but to Emma's fortune and social position; and the second woman he will choose will, for all her claims to docility, delight in publicly professing "true conjugal obedience" to her "lord and master" (II, 487). Other relationships in the novel similarly disprove Emma and Mr Knightley by turns. Frank Churchill, contrary to Emma's strictures on the delight men find in compliant wives, has been attracted to Jane Fairfax precisely for her moral superiority; she does not yield to him when her judgment tells her he is wrong.<sup>15</sup> But in spite of Mr Knightley's defense of sensible men's tastes in wives, both Mrs John Knightley and

<sup>15</sup> Cf. not only their quarrel on the evening the vicarage-guesting party at Donwell Abbey, but her reproach when he indulges in recollections of episodes she considers shameful and thus best forgotten (II, 484): Frank himself readily admits Jane is much his superior (II, 478). It is true, as Margaret Kirkham notes, that in calling her "my angel" he gives evidence of a gallantry that can be seen as an inverted, oblique form of love (Jane Austen, *Persuasion and Fiction*, p. 113); but this form of sexual power is not the same as tyranny over a weak wife.

Harriet Smith are attractive to their son because of their subjective position of total compliance and weakness. The former has a standard answer for everything her husband says: "Very true, my love" (cf. II, 113). And Harriet is so spineless she cannot decide such a simple matter as whether to have a purchase sent to Harfield or to Mrs Gellard's (II, 118) in her relief when Tom decides for her we may see the success of the education Harriet has received: she is indeed "tied to heraid" so strongly that she cannot act and therefore gratefully submits to advice. She will make a very good wife. If the criterion is taken from Mr Knightley's ironic praise to Mrs Weston for her having learned "the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will and doing as you were bid" (II, 124).

If Mr Knightley cannot grant the attraction a woman submissive to the point of paralysis has for some men, it is both because he is different himself and because his own secret prejudice blinds him to the oppression of women around him. In spite of his enlightened aspirations to what seems a stopian social equality and a rational attitude to women, Mr Knightley shows this prejudice in his surprising lack of liberality when supervising young ladies. Thus, he gives evidence of his prejudice against Harriet Smith when he says that, in choosing her, "as a rational companion or useful helpmate, [Mr Martin] could not do worse" (II, 41). This negative judgment is unfair, for Mr Martin could do much worse



then shows Harriet, who is kind, principled and willing to learn, in spite of her irresolution.

Again, when Emma accuses Mr Knightley of believing that in any disagreement between them she must invariably be in the wrong, he counters, "I have still the advantage of you by sixteen years' experience, and by not being a pretty young woman and a spoiled child" (II, 38). In the end, both will yield to the other, laying down their prejudices. Emma, who had earlier held it to be impossible for her to visit the wife of Mr Robert Martin, of Abbey Mill Farm (II, 37), ends by looking forward, not just to Harriet's return from London to marry Robert Martin, but to getting to know Mr Martin himself (II, 411). And Mr Knightley finally admits he is "'now very willing to grant you all Harriet's good qualities," among which he lists wisdom, "very good notions (and) very seriously good principles. . . ." (II, 404). The text thus seems to use the longstanding argument between Mr Knightley and Emma over Harriet Smith to endorse the need for both greater openness to social mobility and a more enlightened attitude towards women's abilities.

Nevertheless, one of Harriet's "good principles," praised by Mr Knightley, is her "planning her happiness in the affections and utility of domestic life," an attitude Emma has always explicitly upheld. Is this to be interpreted as the novel's endorsement of domestic life as the only right source of happiness for women? Such an interpretation seems possible

only at the cost of pre-announcing feminine submission, condemning Emma for her disidentification with her domestic role. For Emma has needed more from adolescent menarche, she has had the power of a usually respected middle-class housewife, but it has not been enough for her. She is lonely and unfulfilled after losing Miss Taylor's company, which provided the double pleasure of domestic intimacy and mild submission to Emma's personal power (cf. E, 5-6, 34).

As Mr Knightley early recognizes, Harriet's charm for Emma is the power Emma can exercise over her. This inclination to control others is due to Emma's failing, which she most corrects as the novel progresses, her "disposition to think a little too well of herself," fed by "the power of having rather too much her own way" (E, 3). Nevertheless, I believe we must distinguish between a love of power as moral defect in Emma and her need for a sphere of action demanding enough for her powers and personal abilities.

In spite of critics who see masculinity as feminine submission, Emma's finesse, arrogance and willfulness, are not presented as more desirable in women than in men. Mr John Knightley, Knightley's younger brother, shares some of Emma's finesse in his sense his word is law, and he can little hear any doubts about the wisdom of his decisions (cf. E, 184). He is so self-centered he enjoys talking to few people outside his family. His wife, Isabella, "worships" him; her attitude, however, is presented as bad for her husband, for "his temper

we met his great perfection," and "The extreme weakness of her temper must hurt him." Both Fane and Mr. Brightley are forced to step in to cover up for his "want of respectful deference toward" his father-in-law (E, 12-127). If vanity and the habit of controlling others are bad for Fane, they are even less salutary for Mr. John Brightley.

At the opposite extreme to Fane's vanity and love of power, we find the attitude that could make her resigned to the roles society offers to women. The best exponent of this attitude is Isabella, who, "passing her life with those she devoted to, full of their merits, blind to their faults, and always innocently busy, might have been a model of right feminine happiness" (E, 143). However, a prerequisite for adopting this model of loving blindness seems to be a weak understanding and slow wit (cf. E, 92). Although Fane, fully conscious after having led Harriet to fall in love with Mr. Eiton, and forced to hear the news of his proposal to himself, feels temporarily attracted to the model of sweetness and tenderness represented by Harriet (as much as by Isabella and Mr. Woodhouse himself (E, 128)), she quickly realizes "it was rather too late in the day to set about being single-minded and ignorant. . . ." (E, 142).

Although Fane does aspire to become more "humble and discreet," her personal, social development will not supply greater attraction to the only fare of work that is open to her. It is not that she does not enjoy looking after "the

little affairs, amusements, perplexities and pleasures of her father and herself,"<sup>26</sup> but she recognizes that on "all these little matters . . . the daily happiness of private life depends . . ."<sup>27</sup> (E, 117). But "these little matters," however enjoyable, are not enough to fill her life. For if we compare the degree to which work and public role make demands on objective and subjective relationships in her life and in Mr. Knolly's, we find a great difference.

A useful tool for the comparison is Foucault's definition of "Power relations, relationships of communication, and objective capacity" as "three types of relationships which in fact always overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end."<sup>28</sup> Foucault defines capacity as a power "which is carried over things and gives the ability to modify, use, remove, or destroy them"; relations of communication as those "which transmit information by means of a language, a system of signs, or any other symbolic medium"; and power relations as "relationships between partners," "an ensemble of actions which induce others and follow from one another."<sup>29</sup> "The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcomes."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Foucault, "Subject and Power," pp. 213-4.

<sup>27</sup>Foucault, "Subject and Power," p. 217.

<sup>28</sup>Foucault, "Subject and Power," p. 221.

While Mr Knightley's work as a gentleman farmer and his role as a magistrate require his increasing (and "objective") knowledge either "some point of law" or "The plan of a drain, the change of a fence, the falling of a tree, and the destination of every acre for wheat, turnips, or spring corn," (II, 106), Emma's decisions need not consult such prices or technological advances; at most she will consider her ability to choose between sending the Bates family a leg or a whole hind quarter of a porker just killed at Hartfield (II, 174). While Mr Knightley will need to engage in frequent communications with both William Lestrange, his steward, and his tenants (Robert Martin, for instance), Emma's conferences with her housekeeper are not mentioned except in the oblique allusion to such matters being "in as regular a train" that they required very little attention. And while Mr Knightley needs to meet at the draw with Mr Elton and other prominent citizens in order to exert a proper influence on the public affairs of Highbury (cf. II, 484), and while the exercise of his power extends to preserving public order when threatened by such events as harassment of ladies by the gypsies (cf. II, 314), Emma's power typically encompasses such issues as the possibility of reviving the old balls at the draw (II, 178). The social importance of such issues has been pointed out in the preceding section; however, in such a community as Highbury the politics of entertainment can hardly tax Emma's wit.

Prose-wives, in Highbury at least, have proved over centuries as their "ideological other," but are severely restricted both in choice (in contrast to men, who may choose between professions, wives have a single role to play) and in the extent to which their abilities are exercised in discharge of their duties. Their work has a political significance, but the types of contact they direct and the relations of communication they engage in are circumscribed to repetitive and often mechanical or trivial pursuits. Moreover, the novel recognizes the wife's generic role of submission to the husband's will (cf. I, 11).<sup>17</sup> Thus Emma paints a portrait of the middle-class housewife as a political player who works to preserve the hegemony of her class, but who is herself, by reason of gender, the male's "other" as "the one over whom power is exercised."<sup>18</sup>

Emma started, at twenty, suffering a mid-life crisis, facing the emptiness of a mother whose dependents have left and whose "opener" (her father) no longer provides companionship. Her marriage represents progress in her social, emotional and sexual life, as she gives up her illusion of being self-sufficient, of being able to satisfy her need for "subjects" of her affection with occasional visits of her sister's family (cf. II, 43). But her need for an outlet for her capacities ends only in frustration: for by marrying an

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Elizabeth Langford, "Nobody's Angel," p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Freud, "Subject and Power," p. 218.

older man and presumably starting a family, Emma must be only moving toward a repetition of her initial situation. Furthermore, by Mr Knightley's own standards, Emma is the loser in the practical aspect of her change in situation; while Miss Taylor, who "has been used to have two persons to please"<sup>42</sup> is marrying Mr Weston must quit by having "but one" (I, 11). Emma's marriage represents an situation in the opposite direction, from having one person to please to having two (her father and her husband).

And yet the text seems to ask us to rejoice at her change. The only positive answer to the dilemma might be found in viewing the resolution, Mr Knightley's decision to move into Hartfield, Emma's home, rather than ask Mr Woodhouse, Emma's phobic father, to move into Knightley's home, Donnell Abbey, as a partial abolition of patriarchy, as a flight into utopianist utopia. The novelist's decision to produce this move constitutes, as John Frowitt Brown observes, "a subtly feminist protest of Mr Knightley, whose practical sensibility does not include the traditional masculine insistence that his future wife leave her family to become Mrs Knightley, the mistress of Donnell."<sup>43</sup> But the move is even more significant if viewed as utopian, as marking a separation between the ordinary world, represented by Highbury, located in Surrey, England, and Hartfield as a new place, an ideal society capable of producing "perfect

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<sup>42</sup>John Frowitt Brown, p. 134.

happiness" (p. 444). In the world outside Hartfield, after all, other marriages are either unequal in virtue, like that of Frank and Jane, equal in duty, like the Eltons', or unequal in love, like the Watsons'. Sharp is the union between Anne and Knightley do we find "equal worth" (pp. 2, 445--This is Knightley's view; Anne is less sanguine about her own worth, which suggests that her sense of self-complexity may have been a reaction against and a cover-up hiding a weak self. p. 444), equal respect, and equal love.

Mr Knightley's move to Hartfield, furthermore, reinforces the world-apart-from framework of the novel, set up by the domestic structure of Hartfield. Thus we find couples and marriages sharing the festive laughter with which the novel ends. In the end, therefore, an analysis of the question of power in the novel has led us back to carnivalesque categories: the concept of carnival thus proves its relevance to the problem of women's subordination and women's relations to power as it is posed in *Pride*.

### Conclusion

It is now time to go back to the question that led us to the discussion of power: are dominant languages in the end inescapable? We are now in a position to reed the question more precisely: is Anne's marriage a sign of the novelistic's surrender to the ideology of male domination? Is the laughter



of carnival merely a form of unconscious, an alienating illusion?

On the contrary, it is possible to see in *Eng* strategies of resistance to patriarchy that appear to unite satirical reflections on women and power and the laughter of carnival. Patriarchal ideology appears in the end locked in a contradiction between the claims of father and future husband, for Mr Woodhouse cannot reconcile himself to Anne's marriage, even if she is to continue living at Hartfield. The solution, the wedge that breaks the insoluble dilemma, appears in a *disguise* or *mask* in the form of a pository pillar in the neighborhood. Mr Woodhouse's fears make him eager to accept "his son-in-law's protection" to save him from "wretched alone every night of his life" (II, 384). The ludicrous danger and the happy solution both move this reader to smile at the novelist's levity, her irreverent, ironic bow before that apparent malefice, masculine strength.

The novel's last book strokes write in one paragraph Mrs Elton's triumph upon hearing of the shabbiness of the marriage ceremony, the "band of new friends" and "the perfect happiness of the union." Then we witness the last dance, the last group of figures in the pageant, incongruously along the wotley terrain of class conflict, loving community, and the marriage union as utopian perfection.

## CHAPTER I CONCLUSION

The three novels that have been the object of this study can be seen as explorations of possible roads to feminine happiness, each following the course of a different woman. In Northanger Abbey Catherine Morland overcomes the silliness and ignorance her culture has instilled in her, innocently ignoring those conventions that could seriously thwart her while she steadily and actively pursues her ends. Her way takes us finally to a world where a young woman can become sensible and morally independent, and a young man learn the acceptance he preserves in spite of relatively enlightened views regarding women. Before they grow and marry, the two must encounter his father's cruel opinion in a world where love is often a pretense meeting ground. In Pride and Prejudice the reader begins by laughing at universally acknowledged truths; then, through the process of growth of the intelligent, merry, yet often intelligent heroine, we are led to explore the way of monologic tenderness and the lure of illusive certainties as she clashes with an excessively proud man. The two, dealing with ideologies that regulate relations between classes and between genders, learn from each other, find love and finally marry. In Emma we discover the

limitations encountered by a woman of superior wit and cleverness, kind but vain and willful, and given to mischievous laughter. In a society where there is no avenue open for the exercise of her powers, she clings to her aristocratic assurance in the prominence of her class and family; she also amuses herself by trying to manipulate others, for she thinks herself capable of extraordinary perceptions. She will learn to distrust certainties, while the man who has been trying to instruct and guide her since her childhood will discover the folly of believing anyone can correct but her or his own self. In the end they will enter a *voluntarily married* life, under special conditions that force a relationship of equality in spite of her greater age and experience. In the three novels here and *Heroina* must grow in some sense before they come together, but the world each couple enters in the end represents a unique form of flight from masculine advance to woman.

I have described these fictional worlds of the novelist's conclusions as counterfactual utopias, as joyful, regenerative constructs, the result of inverting the anti-feminist rivers of official ideologies of Austen's times, while preserving many other conditions of patriarchal society. Thus, after substituting her characters to acknowledge that turn upside down many of the conventions of sentimental novels (the victimized heroine, the perfect hero, *second love*), Austen adapts the device of the happy ending to her counterfactual

comedian. In them, the "perfect felicity" granted to the protagonists becomes a stylized rendering of happy endings, using meta-narrative devices calling attention to themselves and therefore drawing the reader, as a witness/participant, into the act of narrating.

This open avowal of the ending as a fiction does not in any sense diminish its joyful, celebratory quality. Austen appears to have been fully aware of the accepted nature of the typical sentimental fiction.<sup>2</sup> Her own disputes from reality, however, were much more complex. In her novels she drew a world in which the socio-economic and political reality of her times existed only in the periphery, as a world from which women are excluded. Yet this reality is an invisible frame, a lens through which everything is seen. Furthermore, the villages and towns she creates conduct a reality stamped in her conviction that the domestic realm she is drawing is every bit as crucial and deep and penetrated by war and politics as "real, solemn" war and politics. Only it is a reality working on an essential promise: domestic independence and equality, at least as utopian promise, are not to be barred from it. Thus, the very social constraints and obstacles to domestic happiness are not circumvented by an

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<sup>2</sup>For example, Austen disliked one of the stories in *Gracina* 'Don Williams de Gracina' because it ended unhappily: "after many vicissitudes, the lovers marry but do not find happiness" (cf. Austen, *Letters*, p. 494). It seems likely that Austen's distaste for "the horror" of such an ending reflects her awareness that a tragedy end defeats the purpose of such fiction.

idealized heroine, as it happens in typical sentimental fiction, but recognized, examined, and then kept clear, as characters enter a non-world that is itself a denunciation of the brutal restrictions placed on women in Austen's contemporary society.

Similarly, language is there revealed through a multiplicity of layers of meaning. The speech irregularities exhibited by the characters (frequentation, negativeness, parenthesis, illogical affirmations) appear to be contained within hyper-correct, carefully structured sentences. But there is a joy in the subversion of these divergent speeches, while the certainty that the narratorial correctness suggests is consistently undermined by irony as the narrator experiences different voices in a single word or statement. However, even while discursive discourses are being subverted in this fashion, there is occasionally in the narrator's voice a nostalgia for the very monologic certitude she has been denigrating. Nevertheless, the subverting movement has been so often reiterated, so varied, so complex, that the reader suspects the narrator recognizes and seeks her own nostalgia.

And so new layers of meaning are constantly generated: laughter reveals itself, in a seemingly infinite cycle between mocking the narrowness of official ideologies and possibly seeking some perfect certitude that is simultaneously suspected of being impossible. At the same time, Austen's fictions repeatedly record the indelible realness of those

who hold on to the illusion of a completed truth, a truth owned as basis for their individualistic, isolated private lives. To Austin we can apply, therefore, Bakhtin's description of "typical Renaissance realism": "The ever-growing, inexhaustible, ever-laughing principle which increases and recedes is combined with its opposite: the petty, brief, 'material principle'" (RWR, 14);--only it is the "material principle" not of class, but of patriarchy. Indeed, in Austin the incommensurability is based precisely on the clash between and combination of these opposites, contradictory laughter and dogmatism, petty apothem, two ideological forces that interpenetrate and endlessly qualify each other.

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Gabriela Castellanos was born in Santiago de Cuba on November 27, 1914. In February, 1941 she left Cuba with her family, and she graduated from Carol Gates Senior High School in 1943. In 1945 she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marygrove College, Detroit, Michigan, with two majors, French and philosophy, and a minor in English. In 1949 she graduated from Notre Dame University, receiving a Master of Arts degree in theology.

In 1948 she moved to Cali, Colombia, where, from 1948 to 1970, she taught literature and theology at the Colegio Conservatorio del Sagrado Corazon. Between 1971 and 1974 she taught English in Cali at Tricentennial del Valle, from which institution she is currently on leave. She has published a volume of poems in Spanish, Madrigales, and several articles in both English and Spanish. She plans to return to Cali with her family upon graduation.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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